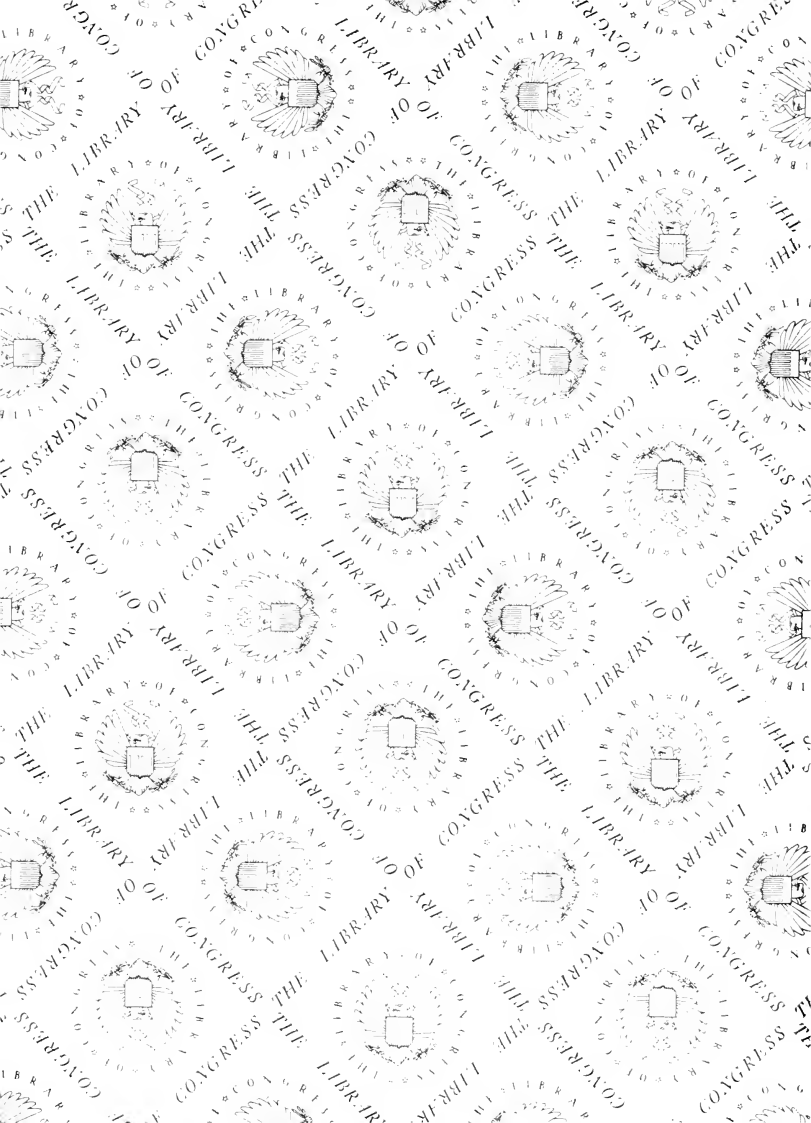
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SKETCHES

OF

JEWISH LIFE AND HISTORY,

BY

HENRY GERSONI.

I seek no riches and no fame;
To be but useful is my aim.

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PREFACE.

In this little volume I offer to the reader a few "Sketches of Jewish Life and History."

The first two stories contain illustrations of Jewish life in Lithuania, giving an insight into the character and domestic circumstances of a large class of people very little known in this country. As a native of Lithuania, who has also seen something of the world, I may be pardoned perhaps for feeling myself somewhat qualified to describe scenes of this character. The reader will find, I hope, that I have treated my subject impartially and without prejudice. I have purposely used expressions here and there that are peculiar to the German-Jewish dialect, especially such

as are interesting on account of tradition and custom. For the general reader I have given the necessary explanations either paranthetically or in marginal notes.

"Rabbi Elchanan, a legend of Mayence," is very popular with the Israelites all over the world. There are some historical truths, I think, at the base of this story. A son of Rabbi Gerschon, surnamed "the Light of the Exiles," the predecessor of Rabbi Simeon of Mayence, was abducted by the Romish Clergy, and a prominent clergyman actually did embrace Judiasm a few years afterward. The legend of Rabbi Elchanan evidently makes of these two persons one, and takes the time most convenient for its purpose. In the plan and personages of this story I have followed somewhat the renowned German novelist Leopold Compert; but I have changed entirely the expression of sentiments and principles.

The historical sketch of "The Fall of Bethar and the Martyrs," I published in the *Jewish Times* two years ago; but as I have been assured by my friends that it was then read with great interest, and that a few historical suggestions given deserved the notice of scholars, it is, with slight alterations and corrections, reprinted in this book.

The last story of this volume, "The Converted Noblemen," is an elaborate description of an historical incident of the middle of the eighteenth century. The Jewish community of my native city, Wilna, commemorates every year the martyrdom of the Noble Convert Potozky on the second day of the Feast of Weeks, and has in its manuscript prayer-book an especial prayer for that purpose. The "Pear-tree" on the grave of that convert is pointed out to the Jewish youth even at the present day. The family of Potozky's friend Zriemby, has produced many learned Israelites since the conversion of their noble ancestor, and exists yet in Holland, where it is held in great respect.

The reception that the public may accord me in the present instance will, if sufficiently encouraging, prompt me to proceed with the preparation of a work of more importance and greater interest.

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, March 25th, 1873.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHARACTERISTIC SKETCHES:

PAGE.

THE SINGER'S REVENGE 9

APPENDIX—MUTUAL DEATH INSURANCE CO. . 45

METAMORPHOSE OF A LITHUANIAN BOY:

PART FIRST, AS TOLD BY HIMSELF. 51

PART SECOND, AS GATHERED FROM RELIABLE SOURCES. 85

RABBI ELCHANAN, A LEGEND OF MAYENCE. . . 121

HISTORICAL SKETCHES:

THE FALL OF BETHAR AND THE MARTYRS . 173

THE CONVERTED NOBLEMEN 187

THE SINGER'S REVENGE.

I.

THE MISER AND HIS SURNAME.

ELIAKOM, surnamed "*The Fly*," was a well-known citizen of Oshmiana in Lithuania. He was known to be a rich man, and had acquired the unenviable reputation of being the greatest miser in the community. He not only invariably refused to help an unfortunate brother; but even lavished abuses on such as dared to apply to him for assistance.

A renowned preacher once came to the city of Oshmiana and delivered a most edifying and instructive lecture in the synagogue. The following day he called on the richest members of the community requesting some reward for his trouble. They received him with great respect and opened their purses liberally. He called also on Eliakom, but the miser slammed the door in his face as soon as he heard the object of his visit. This was more than the learned man could well endure, and the consequence was an announcement that "the renowned preacher of Kelm has consented to stay another week in Oshmiana, and he is going to deliver a second lecture next Sabbath afternoon."

The community was delighted with the intelligence and at the appointed time, the synagogue was crowded.

Nor were the good people disappointed in their expectation; the lecturer excelled himself on that occasion. His text was Is. vii, 18, in which verse Egypt is likened unto a fly and Assyria unto a bee. He preached on the sins which caused the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, and metaphorically compared the two valiant nations with two different courses of action. Assyria, which is likened unto a bee, illustrates the actions of those who, if they sometimes do any good, do not perform the action with proper discretion, or balance it by accompanying evil. Like the bee which prepares honey and wax for the benefit of human-kind, but pursues its work with unbecoming noise and sometimes even stings the man before he is permitted to enjoy what was prepared for him. Mizraim, which is compared to a fly, illustrates the actions of such men as extract from the community whatever benefit they can, but render it no service in return. Like the fly which bites man and drinks his blood; but is of no service to the world. The behavior of the bee is frequently very reprehensible. Man often says to it: "I want neither thy honey nor thy sting." But the fly is beyond a doubt the more obnoxious of the two. Such are the two great enemies of Israel. Assyria, the bee; that is good actions accompanied by some evil, and Egypt, the fly, that is evil without any accompanying good at all. Beware of the last, of Mizraim the fly!

To this effect the man of lore continued illustrating his ideas with innumerable passages from the Talmud. The audience were delighted with both preacher and sermon,

and Eliakom, the miser, was thenceforth surnamed *The Fly* In this noble manner was the learned man revenged on him, but it did not produce the desired effect; for Eliakom was not the man who cared for mere words. Another and more effectual lesson was he to learn from a person who was far inferior to the erudite preacher of Kelm.

II.

ELIAKOM'S SON AND COAT.

ELIAKOM had a son who was eighteen years of age. He also had a coat of about the same age as his son. His son had to perform the functions of a business-clerk, an errand-boy, a house servant; in short, he was Jack-of-all-trades. For Eliakom was a practical man and argued thus: "Why should I spend my money on servants, knowing that Solomon, my son, is going to take all I have when I die? Let him work for it while I live." So also had his coat to perform the offices of a garment by day and a coverlet by night, of a house coat at home, of a dress coat in the synagogue, and at last it was used also for a rag to take a pan from the stove or to wipe a plate; for the coat had long tails and its owner was not the man to neglect such an advantage.

When Solomon reached his eighteenth year, his father thought it would be a good thing if he could get rid of him on some cheap terms; for the ungrateful child was not satisfied with the three meals a day which he cost his father;

he wanted good clothing and even some pocket-money (the boy was spoiled by extravagant companions). There was no danger of his getting the money he desired, for he never knew where his father kept the key of the money-box. Not so was it about dress. The poor old man could not carry with him all the goods he had in his store, and the spoiled boy actually had the audacity to take advantage of this circumstance. He one day took a quantity of alpaca from the store when his father was absent, and gave it to the tailor who fashioned it into a coat for him and charged his father for sewing it. It was very severe on the poor old man, such an offense as this, and he resolved to rid himself of the culprit—to marry him off.

Now if Eliakom had lived in a more civilized land, where there are always many marriageable widows and spinsters, it would have been very easy to procure a wife for his son. For, strange to say, Solomon was in every respect the very reverse of his father. He was a manly and intellectual youth, sociable and good-natured, with a figure and countenance that were eloquent in his favor; and his attractions were not lessened by his being an heir. But the poor old man lived in Luthuania and there it was somewhat difficult to procure a wife for Solomon. However "there is in nature no evil without a remedy," as the old adage says, and Lithuania having an insufficient supply of wives, is abounding with marriage-brokers, called *Shadchanim*. The practice of these men there, is almost reduced to a science; there is nothing impossible for a Luthuanian marriage-broker in the way of his vocation. To such a practitioner did Eliakom take recourse in his dilemma, and he was not

disappointed. The Shadchen speedily succeeded in finding in a neighboring village a homely girl, whose father was willing to pay any price for a son-in-law. The bargain was closed to the satisfaction of both parties, (I mean the fathers, for the children have no voice in such matters) and on the appointed day Eliakom hired a horse and wagon to convey himself, son and coat to the place where the happy bride resided. By doing this he saved the dues that must be paid to certain officials who perform the wedding ceremony in the city of Oshmiana.

III.

THE SINGER AND HIS THREAT.

While the wagon was being prepared for the journey by Solomon, and Eliakom was arranging some little business-matters in his store preparatory to leaving the city, a young man of noticeable decency in dress and of genteel deportment introduced himself to the old man, as the tenor-singer of the synagogue choir.

"I came to request you," the young man said, "to take me along with you to the wedding of your son. I will perhaps have the chance to earn some money among the guests, for I can entertain them with fine songs and with most interesting sleight-of-hand performances. Thus you would confer a favor upon me without any loss to yourself.

I feel certain that the guests will be pleased with me, and will thank you for bringing me with you."

Eliakom became angry at the singer. He had to make a two-days' journey, and how could he take anybody along without the risk of spending something on him.

"There are fools enough everywhere," he replied. "I do not see the necessity of encumbering myself with one on a journey which has already cost me more than I can well afford."

The synagogue singers in Lithuania receive no salary. The congregation provides only for their board; but for the rest they must look out for themselves. For the purpose of gaining the other necessaries of life they often entertain social and wedding parties with songs, legerdemain and mimicry. Samuel, the tenor was known as the best singer and juggler in the community. He was welcomed at every social party, not only by the Jewish population, but also by the non-Jewish inhabitants, and even by the official authorities of that place. He spoke the Russian, Polish, and even the obsolete Lithuanian languages with the purest accent, and could mimic everybody with remarkable skill, from a drunken peasant up to a commanding officer of the army. He knew the best songs that are contained in those languages, and sang with a sonorous voice and good effect. All his various accomplishments and talents were rendered so much the more acceptable by the strict morality of his utterances. However well received he might be in any quarter, he never took advantage of the welcome that was extended to him. He often threw his audience into roars of laughter; but it was never at anybody's expense.

In short, though Samuel was the pet of society, he never became its tyrant, and that is about the best that can be said of any popular character.

The miser's rude refusal to take him along was very deeply felt by the poor artist. His eyes sparkled with indignation and his face flushed to the roots of his hair. He hesitated a moment, and then raising his hand he said sternly and with emphasis:

"Mark my words, Eliakom, I am going to teach you a lesson which will make you either wiser than you ever were or cause you to die more miserably than you ever lived." And he left the house.

About half an hour afterward, as the wedding party was on the point of starting, and Eliakom in his coat with Solomon at his side was seated in the wagon ready to take the reins, a young man approached him and asked whether his uncle from the country was there, as he had been intending to make some purchases of Eliakom.

"About what time was your uncle to call on me?" asked Eliakom.

"Let me see. He wanted to go to P. at one o'clock. He would be detained there for about an hour or so, and then he intended to go to you. Well, I should say about half-past two would be the time at which he was to be at your store."

"Why, child, it is not two o'clock yet!" exclaimed the miser joyfully. Your uncle will find me at his service."

"How glad he will be," rejoined the young man, and went away. Eliakom returned to open his store for the expected customer. He waited till four o'clock, at which

time the young man came again, and informed him that his uncle had been unexpectedly called away from the city; but he had said he would be back in ten days, and would then buy what he wanted. Eliakom closed the store and started on his journey without further delay.

IV.

THE INCIDENTS OF THE JOURNEY.

THREE hours' ride from Oshmiana there is a white inn with green shutters, known by the name of *Green Castle*, where Eliakom purposed to stay for the night. Arriving there he found all the gates closed and no human being in sight except a solitary peasant who was sitting on a hedge near by smoking his pipe and looking vacantly ahead. Eliakom called to him, asking him to open the gates of the inn; (for Solomon had never been out of town and did not know how to do it,) but the peasant took no notice of him. Eliakom imagined that he wanted something for his troubles, he repeated his request and threw him a slice of "city baked bread," which is generally considered a great treat for a peasant. The son of Cham (such is the appellation of the serfs common among the Lithuanian Israelites) took the bread, put it into his bosom and calmly resumed his former position. Eliakom thought he was deaf, and showed him by gesticulation what he wanted of him, at the same time throwing him another piece of bread;

but the peasant took the other piece of bread and replying something to the effect that he was not going to be the obedient servant of every d——d Jew, again sat down smoking his pipe and looking in an opposite direction.

This was more than the miser could bear. He sprang from his wagon, and struck the peasant three violent blows in the face and breast. But oh, horror! the serf stood up and extended his hands convulsively, blood streamed forth from his nose and mouth: he staggered a few steps backward and fell dead! For a few minutes Eliakom stood petrified with fright at this terrible catastrophe, and, as soon as he was able to collect his thoughts, made up his mind that there was no remedy for him but flight. He jumped in his wagon and drove off with the greatest speed, whipping his horse without mercy. As for Solomon, he sat in his corner bewildered, unable to utter a word.

Eliakom might have proceeded for about an hour, and was congratulating himself that night was fast approaching, when he heard the tramp of a horse behind him. A few minutes more and he could clearly distinguish the words: "Stop, in the name of the Czar and the Law!"

"There is no doubt," Eliakom thought, "that the dead peasant has been found, and a gendarme is coming to arrest us." A cold perspiration burst from him, and he could hardly bring the horse to a stop, so unnerved was he. A gendarme it actually was. He approached the wagon, made a few remarks about the foaming horse that had been so mercilessly treated, and asked for the passports of the passengers. Eliakom felt easier, for if the soldier had come to arrest him for murder he would treat him in a different

manner, and he handed him the documents. The gendarme did not open the papers, he stuck them into his sleeve and ordered the passengers to turn back and follow him. Eliakom remonstrated, saying that he had business before him which suffered no delay; but finding that it was of no use, he asked how far he was to return, and where was he to be conducted.

"Within halfa vierst of the 'Green Castle' lives the judge of the district," replied the soldier. "I am to take you to him. He will examine your papers, and if they are all correct, you will not be detained."

"But could not you glance over the papers yourself?" said Eliakom imploringly. "Business is so pressing that I can lose no time."

"Cannot help it. Law is law," was the laconic answer.

But it was impossible to return within such a short distance of the "Castle" without running the risk of being arrested for murder. Every effort must be made to avoid it if possible.

"I will give you a ruble," said Eliakom with a trembling voice, "if you will take the trouble to examine our passports yourself and let us go."

"I have strict orders to bring every passenger to the Judge himself. Would not do a thing against my orders for even twenty-five rubles."

Such an answer from a Russian official is as good as fixing the price of the favor he is requested to do. Eliakom tried to beat the gendarme down, but he was immovable. "Cannot do it," was his only reply. The miser had to take out the immense sum of *twenty-five rubles* and give it to

the arm of the law! What he felt at that time cannot well be described. The soldier took the money and allowed them to proceed. One hour more and they arrived at an inn where they were peacefully installed for the night. Eliakom had to wash the blood stains from his coat. Here he had an opportunity to reflect upon the adventures of his journey. He had become a murderer in his old age, and had to spend a large amount of money to escape the consequences of the crime. Who knows whether he is secure even now? How easily all these misfortunes could have been avoided!

V.

THE GUEST AT THE WEDDING.

ELIAKOM and his son proceeded on their journey without further trouble, and the third day they arrived at the place where the bride and her family were awaiting them. Unpleasant remarks were made, and irksome questions were asked about the paleness and weary appearance of the guests; but Eliakom stammered a reply to the effect that "the uncomfortable lodgings and bad meals at the inns would affect the health even of a giant like *Og, the King of Bashan*," and all further inquiries were happily averted. Eliakom was sick, and very meditative for the next two days, but he urged the wedding to be performed without delay. Strange to say, and to the astonishment of the bridegroom and two or three guests who knew him before,

Eliakom began to display some marks of liberality. He made presents to the bride, the musicians, and the poor of the village, and was generally much more agreable than he had ever been in his brightest days. Solomon looked at his father with emotion.

"The fearful incidents of our journey," he thought, "have been the cause of resuscitating the Jewish heart that has been lying dormant in my father's breast, and the image of God now reasserts its position in his countenance." *

On the evening of the wedding, while the guests were sitting around the well-spread tables, (for the bride's family were hospitable people, and on that occasion they had more reason than ever to be so) a man dressed in Oriental attire entered the room, and introduced himself as a native of Jerusalem, coming from the Holy Land to collect money for charitable institutions that were located there. Of course he was welcomed as a Rabbi and a brother. A plate was immediately passed around the table to receive donations in furtherance of his mission, and after that the whole party joined in requesting him to tell them about the wonderful things that were to be seen and learned in the Holy Land. Their curiosity was more than satisfied. The stranger told them so many stories about the "West-

* According to the Rabbinical teaching, every man, being created in the image of God, has a natural disposition to be good. This is what makes man look so noble when he is performing some good action. If man follows his evil passions, Satan causes his soul to fall asleep, and the image of God departs from him. Hence the repulsive expression in the face of a sinner.

ern Wall," the cave of Machpelah, Rachel's grave, and sim ilar objects of interest, that they forgot all about the well flavored dishes and wines that were being served. The only thing to be regretted was that he could not speak their dialect. He spoke no language but Hebrew, and that with the Oriental accent, generally known as the "Sephardaic pronounciation." The women, and some of the men even, could not understand him; but they thronged around him nevertheless, and made the others act as interpreters. When their curiosity was satisfied, all returned to their seats and the Eastern brother and Rabbi was invited to partake of the supper. But he refused to sit at the table; he could not eat in the manner Europeans eat, nor did he like to be stared at while eating after his own fashion. This objection presented no difficulty. A table-cloth was spread on the floor of an adjoining room, and everything was arranged thereon to the satisfaction of the "pious" man. Some of the guests even had the pleasure of seeing him seated on the floor with his legs crossed under him, eating without either spoon or fork. After a while the door was closed, in order to let him enjoy the meal as he liked best.

After the lapse of an hour or so the host began to think that the stranger had had ample time to satisfy his appetite, and he sent a servant to invite him to return to the rest of the party. The messenger came back with the report that the door was locked from within and that he received no answer on knocking at it. The host surmised that the "pious" man was performing his devotion, saying grace after his meal, and he left him undisturbed for another hour. But

when the messenger was sent a second time and returned with the same answer as before, adding that he had looked through the key-hole and had seen no light in the room, all present rushed to the door, and after repeated rapping forced it open. To their dismay they found the room deserted; the Oriental brother and Rabbi had vanished, with all the silver plate on which he was served, not forgetting even the candlestick of the same metal. Messengers were sent out in all directions to detect the scoundrel, inquiries were made at every house in the village, but in vain. Nobody knew a traveler from Jerusalem, no one had seen that night a man whose appearance and attire would answer to the description of the messengers.*

VI.

THE BAAL-SHEM.

THERE was much disturbance in the house on the following day about this loss of silver plate, and even in the whole village there was nobody but talked of the Oriental swindler. They were certain that he was from Jerusalem, because of his speaking no language but Hebrew. Everybody wondered how a man from that holy place could be such a scoundrel, unless he was possessed by the Evil-one himself. Some of the women who had seen him at the party, even asserted that they had noticed from the strange lustre of his eyes that there was some-

* See Appendix—"The Mutual Death Insurance Co."

thing wrong about him; but they had been afraid to utter their suspicions lest he should do them some harm with his evil influence. Even the more practical-minded men, who were ready to admit that there are scoundrels among every class of people, could not account for this man's sudden appearance and disappearance since nobody, except the persons that were present at the wedding, had seen him either entering or leaving the village. While this commotion was at its height, one of those holy men who can perform great wonders by the mention of the Holy Name (called Baal-Shem), arrived in the village accompanied, of course, by his *famulus*. He performed three miracles in the act of alighting from his wagon. Two beggars, the one lame and the other blind, approached his wagon asking alms, evidently taking him for a common passenger. He answered them:

"A man like myself has no money to spare, but I shall give you something which is worth more than all the money in the world. Stand here and let me lean on your shoulders while I alight."

They wondered at the meaning of his words and obeyed his orders. He pronounced some mystic words, leaned on their shoulders with both hands and jumped from his wagon with the agility of a young man, though he was a very old and feeble-looking person. They experienced a severe shock through their frames as his hands touched them, and instantly the lame man became straight, and the blind man received his sight. They ran through the streets nearly mad with joy, relating the miracles to every one and calling aloud:

"Blessed be the Lord, that there are such men in Israel!"

The excitement about the theft was forgotten over these new wonders, for every one in the village knew the two men on whom the miracles had been performed. They had been walking around the streets for two days previous, asking alms in the most miserable condition of bodily infirmity, and now they were seen running as hale and hearty as could be. The inn where the holy man stopped became beleagured with the sick and infirm that came to solicit his help, and with others who came only for curiosity, to look at him. But he would not show himself to any one before he performed his afternoon devotion. His famulus would not give any information about his master to the numerous inquiries. He said he was not permitted to say more than: „Believe in what you see and are convinced of, and never try to penetrate the mysteries of the Lord."

The chronicler of this story knows nothing of the wonders of spiritualism, except what he reads of them in the newspapers every now and then; but he firmly believes in the principle just quoted, and having seen such wonders performed by men who have no idea of subjecting spirits in the ordinary spiritualistic manner, he is not afraid to affirm that there are and will be wonders beyond the comprehension of man as long—as long—well, as long as there are such men as the Baal-Shem existing in the world, no matter in what clime or under what banner they are sailing.

VII.

THE BRIDE'S FATHER AND THE BAAL-SHEM.

Among those who waited for the advice of the holy man was Nahum, the man who had gained Solomon, the son of Eliakom, for a son-in-law, and had lost the silver plate in which he had so hospitably served the stranger from Jerusalem. A holy man must know everything, and Nahum came to ask him how he could recover the stolen silver. When his name was announced to the Baal-Shem, the latter sprang to his feet as if he had received an electric shock and exclaimed :

" Heaven be merciful unto thy children ! There are the crimes of soul-trading and bloodshed in the trails of their garments, and they are ignorant of their guilt. Thus, alas! it comes to pass that they value a piece of metal more than their conscience, an earthen vessel more than honesty and truth !"

Nahum heard the exclamation while he was standing at the door, and trembled in every limb. It was evident that the holy man knew what he had come for ; but what meant the frightful allusions to soul-trading and bloodshed ? He was undecided whether to approach the Baal-Shem or not ; but while he was hesitating the latter continued :

" Nahum-bar-Jonah, step nearer to me. Or art thou ashamed of thy crimes ? Truly, I tell thee that the crime of the Ishmaelites who bought Joseph from the hands of his brothers, was no less than that of the men who sold their

brother!" Nahum was paralyzed with terror; but the holy man continued:

"Nahum-bar-Jonah, thou hast come hither to consult how to recover certain silver plate which has been stolen from thee; but whither wilt thou go to recover thy soul which thou hast lost by thy own evil deeds? Thou must regain it if thou believest in the One who gave thee a soul as pure and holy as such a giver can. Thou must recover thy soul if thou hast any desire of returning it unto Him that gave it! Or wilt thou perish forever in the hand of the Evil-one? Behold, the spirits of thy forefathers (here he recited Nahum's genealogy up to the tenth generation) hovering in the air around thee, waiting for thy decision, anxious to know whether they are to recognize their offspring in eternity, or must disown him forever!"

Only a single tallow candle was burning in the spacious room, and its dim light added to the solemnity of the scene. The impressive words of the old man and his terrible monitions took such hold of Nahum's imagination that he actually believed he saw the spirits to which the seer had called his attention. Hell seemed to be gaping at his feet and evil spirits stretching their hands to take hold of him and drag him into the abyss. Utterly overcome he fell at the feet of the Baal-Shem crying: "Save me father! Save my soul!" The old man raised him from the floor and said:

"A crushed spirit is a sacrifice agreeable to the Lord. Repentance, prayer and righteous deeds can avert the doom of a sinner."

"But tell me, Rabbi," cried Nahum, "what is the fear-

ful crime which I have committed, and how am I to atone for it?"

"Thou hast committed a terrible sin in buying the poor lad Solomon from the hands of his avaricious father. Solomon is to sacrifice all his days for thy daughter; thou hast made him swear to do so in the sight of God and men without asking him whether he is able or willing to act in accordance with his solemn promise. Such a thing is no less a crime than soul-barter, and if Solomon is not contented with the wife that has been forced upon him, and violates the oath he has taken, his sin falls upon the heads of those who forced him to perjure himself."

"Oh, I understand it now," exclaimed Nahum; "but you know well, Rabbi, that such is the custom among our people, and my sin is only the consequence of evil example. And yet I would offer my life to redeem the error, did I only know of some way in which to do it."

"What is united in the name of God cannot be severed," rejoined the Baal-Shem, "but there is another way to repair the wrong. For the artifices thou hast employed to secure Solomon's hand for thy daughter, thou must recompense him with kindness and generosity. Five months' time hast thou devoted to working out this marriage scheme, thou must therefore keep Solomon and his wife five years in thy house, treat him like a son, and train him in business at thy own expense. By that time he will become contented with his homely wife, and she will learn to love and respect him under the influence of the example thou wilt set for her. This is the only advice I can give thee in the matter. I am certain that good treatment will

have the desired effect upon Solomon, for he has a good heart and many excellent qualities. If thou wilt do this, thy sin will be forgiven, the happiness of thy children will be secured, and God will give thee His blessings as He does to all who honor His name."

Giving this wholesome advice was not enough for the holy man; he also made Nahum swear upon a scroll of the Law that he would follow it. He then accepted the gift which Nahum offered him, and promised to help him in recovering the stolen silver. Accompanying Nahum to the door with a blessing, he dismissed him with the following words:

"Tell Eliakom-bar-Daniel, the father of thy son-in-law, that Satan is hard at work painting a room for him in hell with the blood of a peasant."

VIII.

ELIAKÒM AND BAAL-SHEM.

Nahum reached home in the greatest agitation. He spoke about the holy man and the wonders he had performed in the most glowing terms, pronounced him a benefactor of mankind (just the title which the Chinese physicians like to assume) and addressing Eliakom he said with a mysterious expression:

"Hasten to him, Eliakom, he will save you, body and soul. He knows the most secret thoughts of a man's heart. He told me that there are in heaven some fearful accusa-

tions against you; and showed me a room in hell with Satan hard at work painting it with the blood of an uncircumcised one.* That room, he said, was destined for you. Go to him immediately, lest the Evil-one should accomplish his work and you be lost forever."

Eliakom nearly fainted at these words; he hastily left the house and ran half bewildered to the man who was to save him. Arriving there he was told by the Baal-Shem's *famulus* that he could not see the holy man. He (the famulus) had orders not to admit anybody into his presence for he had important work on hand. Eliakom said he would wait until the holy man would be ready to receive him. The famulus offered him a seat in the antechamber and requested him to watch at the door that nobody might interrupt his master; as for himself, he would have to leave his post for a few minutes. No sooner was the famulus out of sight than Eliakom looked through the key-hole into the room of the holy man; and great was the sight which he saw!

The Baal-Shem stood in the middle of room dressed in a white robe, both hands raised up toward heaven and his face glowing with devotion. He remained in this attitude for several minutes, and then burst out in a most fervent prayer. Eliakom listened intently and discovered that the man was interceding in his behalf; he prayed that the great sin that stained Eliakom's soul might be washed off. He prayed that the wrong which Eliakom had done by selling the future of his son might be forgiven, and finally

* This expression conveys an idea of especial abhorrence.

he prayed that Eliakom might be cleansed from the blood-stains with which he had defiled his soul, and that he, the Baal-Shem, might be enabled to annihilate the devil which Eliakom had created by his atrocious crime.

Eliakom could hear every word and he could see the earnest and devout expression on the old man's face. He was in anguish. Suddenly there was heard a low murmur through the room, the old man's eyes sparkled with unusual brilliancy, a dark figure, like that of a peasant, arose as if from the ground, and the Baal-Shem called out: "Here thou art, son of Topheth! I defy thee in the name of——!" Grasping the figure with both hands, the holy man commenced to struggle with it. Eliakom sank down in a swoon.

When he reopened his eyes, he was in the Baal-Shem's room, and the old man and his famulus were standing at his side. The first words he could utter were: "Have you conquered him, Rabbi? Is my soul saved?"

"Fear not, my son," the old man replied, "my task is not finished yet, but I hope I will be successful in the end. Thy presence behind the door gave the devil a chance to escape for the present. But how dost thou feel now?"

Much better, Rabbi," Eliakom answered. "But tell me, for heaven's sake, how can I atone for my crime?"

The Baal-Shem told him that he must reform his life altogether. He must henceforth treat everybody with respect, especially those who wanted his assistance. He must gives tithes to the poor from all his earnings, and do his utmost for the benefit of the community. Eliakom promised to obey these injunctions in every particular, and

the Baal-Shem wrapped him in his own white garment and made him swear that he would never alter his resolution, *no matter what his future experience might be.* The Baal-Shem and his famulus answered "*amen*" when the oath had been pronounced. A reddish light glistened through the room for a second. Eliakom was then encouraged by the holy man to be of good cheer, ordered to come to-morrow again, and dismissed with a blessing.

On the next day the Baal-Shem told Eliakom that he must leave the village for a few days. He therefore ordered him to go home and be cheerful on the ensuing Sabbath, for he, the holy man would not forget to do for him whatever he could even in his absence.

He ordered Eliakom together with Nahum to sleep in the room where the stranger from Jerusalem had taken his lonely supper, on the ensueing Saturday night.* Nobody in the house should know why they were doing so. They should not be afraid of what they might see ; but neither of them should stir from his place nor utter a loud word until daybreak. They might have a candle burning in the room if they wished it. On the following Monday the Baal-Shem would return, and Eliakom should come to see him.

*The punishment of the wicked is, according to the Cabalists, suspended for the Sabbath day. When the day is over and the people of God have pronounced the blessing of "discrimination" between hallowed and unhallowed time, the angel of punishment calls out, "Let the wicked return to *Sheol.*" This summons is immediately obeyed by the poor condemned souls, who leave their Sabbath enjoyments to return to their respective places of suffering. But

IX.

THE VISIONS OF THE NIGHT.

Eliakom informed Nahum secretly about the orders of the Baal-Shem, and they waited impatiently and with fear for the things that were going to occur. They tried to be as cheerful as they could; but their minds could not well shake off the anticipation of what might await them next Saturday night. At last the appointed night arrived and Nahum informed his family that he was going to spend it with Eliakom in privacy, for they had particular business to transact. All the inmates of the house went to bed, and Nahum with Eliakom repaired to their own designated apartment. A burning candle was placed upon the table, and the two having said their night prayers went to bed with palpitating hearts.

When the hour struck twelve a window was raised by

on their journey to *Sheol* they may become dangerous to every living being they meet. The Sabbath night is accordingly a very dangerous time, and for this reason the 94th Psalm, which is recited at funerals, has been incorporated in the prayers of that evening. The recitation of this Pslam has the power to keep off the influence of evil spirits. Among the hymns of that evening, there is one commencing with the words "*Addir Ayom v'nora*," which, tradition says, has been composed by a great man who had been on a journey on that fatal night, and had been clear-sighted enough to see the evil spirits on their flight to Hell. The fact might be believed but for the literary merit of that hymn, which is too great for the dreadful circumstances under which it is alledged to have been composed.

some mysterious power in the room where Nahum and Eliakom were lying. The two moved closer to one another. A figure appeared in the opened window. It was that of the stranger from Jerusalem. It alighted upon the floor without the slightest sound and moved with a ghost-like motion toward the centre of the room. There it sat down upon the floor crossing its legs beneath and gesticulating in a manner as if it were enduring the greatest tortures. It then began to strike its breast with its left hand while with its right it drew from its capacious pockets and bosom the silver vessels which had been lost, and deposited it on the floor in the order in which it had been served at the wedding. This done it arose from the floor and glided from the room as quietly as it had come.

"Did you see, Nahum?" whispered Eliakom. "Your silver is here."

"Yes, I see," was the reply. "For heaven's sake, do not speak!"

A few minutes afterward a slight murmur was heard outside. Another figure appeared in the window. It was that of the bleeding peasant. Eliakom shrank together in consternation.

"Put your hands around me," whispered Eliakom, "or I am lost!" Nahum silently complied with the request. The bleeding ghost moved slowly toward the bed, grasping the air with its hands, as if desirous of catching something. It was already near the bed, and with its next movement would encounter Eliakom's head. But suddenly the Baal-Shem appeared in the window; with one leap he was between the ghost and the bed. Seizing the former with

both hands he uttered in a very deep voice: "Here thou art in my power, son of Topheth! Give up thy evidence, or I will condemn thee to eternal anguish!" The ghost struggled for a moment, and having been forced upon its knees by the Baal-Shem, it took out from its bosom a piece of bread soiled with blood which the holy man snatched from its hand and hid in his breast. He then pronounced some mystic words, and the ghost disappeared through the window. The holy man then contemplated the piece of bread with an air of misgiving, placed it under the pillow of the two bed companions, stretched his hands over their heads and pronounced solemnly and slowly the following blessing:

"May the Merciful give you peace and rest, and may He enable you to live in such a manner that your old age shall be an atonement for all the sins you have hitherto committed." And he vanished through the window, which closed of itself behind him.

With the dawn of morning the two bed companions arose to narrate the wonders they had seen. There were no end of the marvels they could tell, and the blessings which they poured upon their benefactor. As nobody but Eliakom and his son knew the history of the peasant, the appearance of his ghost was explained in different ways. And no one could ever doubt the truth of their story after seeing the substantial evidence that was displayed in support of it.

On the following Monday the Baal-Shem returned to the village and found Nahum and Eliakom waiting for him at the inn. Nahum was admitted into his presence first, and

dismissed after a short interview, during which the holy man gave him his advice and blessings, and accepted the gifts which were offered him. Eliakom was then introduced. Having narrated all he had seen on the preceding Saturday night, he showed the old man the piece of bread which was surrendered by the ghost. The Baal-Shem took it in his hand and examining it said that it was not quite so large as it had been originally. He regretted to see that with all the trouble he had taken to rescue the evidences against Eliakom which were in Satan's possession, he had still not wholly succeeded. A portion of the evidence had been retained by the Evil-one. Eliakom must have committed some sin of which the holy man was not aware when he interceded in his behalf. Eliakom had better make a full confession if he wished to be entirely saved.

Eliakom had a great many things to confess: among others he related how badly he treated the tenor of the synagogue choir. The old man listened patiently to all that Eliakom had to say, and when the other finished he said:

"Yes, there are sins, which are morally as bad as, or even worse than murder, though people think the least of them. If one kills a man, he sins against the community, depriving it of a member that was created by God to contribute to the wellfare of all; he sins against the laws of nature, destroying a being of body and soul like himself; and he betrays a disposition most dangerous to mankind, being void of all sympathy with the sufferings—aye, even with dying agonies—of a fellow creature! 'Whoso sheddeth the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.' But he who discourages another one in his legitimate efforts

to make a living, and thereby causes the heart's blood af a fellow man to boil with wrath and shame and dispair, he commits as much of a sin as though he were to kill him, for the moral agonies of disappointment and shame are fully equal to, if not worse than, the agonies of death. And society suffers perhaps more by such an uncharitable action; for if the disappointed man is not of the highest moral cultivation, he is apt to become desperate and dangerous to his neighbors, while the dead can do no harm whatever in the world."

The holy man continued for some time in this solemn strain, and Eliakom, whose heart was sufficiently softened by his experiences of the last few days, was well prepared to appreciate every word. He wept bitterly, and promised to repair, as much as was in his power, all the wrongs he had committed against his fellow-men. The Baal-Shem made him swear again never to alter his good resolution, and promised to work in his behalf that the last portion of the evidence of his guilt that was in the hands of Satan should be recovered—after which he might rest assured that God and man were reconciled to him.

X.

THE METAMORPHOSIS.

The community of Oshmiana was astonished at the intelligence that Eliakom, "the Fly," having returned from the wedding of his son, had ordered a new coat for him-

self, and had declared the intention of giving a reception party as soon as Solomon and his newly-married wife should visit the city. Soon after, news of even a more startling character was circulated; Eliakom had donated a handsome sum of money to be distributed among the poor students of the Talmud that were quartered in Oshmiana, and he had subscribed as a regular contributor to all the charitable institutions of the place. Solomon and his wife arrived after a time, and invitations to the anticipated reception party were sent to all the prominent folks in the community.

The good people did not know what to make of all this. Some were of the opinion that "a Jew cannot help wishing to have his brethren participate in his mirth, when he feels happy," and Eliakom, miser as he was, was an Israelite after all. Others said that as long as Solomon was not properly provided for, Eliakom was perfectly right in saving every kopeek for his only son; but now, having well provided for Solomon, the old man wished to enjoy life and to behave in such a manner as becomes every respectable Israelite. Thus public opinion, all at once turned in favor of Eliakom; it even made an effort to justify his former conduct.

Truly, "public opinion is a fickle goddess." It is an almost every-day occurence that a man who is one day the object of contempt and condemnation for his evil ways, becomes the next day the favorite of the public, is lauded to the skies for some good act, the first, perhaps the only one, in his life. In Greece no one was to be declared a god while he lived; but no sooner did one die while in the

enjoyment of public favor, than he was elevated to divinity, and a thousand stories were invented to confirm his position. Most biographies and stories of saints, heroes or other "great men" were written after they had departed from this life in some unusually interesting manner. Few of them would be known to us were it not for their last, perhaps their only worthy deed. "Public opinion is a fickle goddess;" she acts upon impulse. Happy the man whose last act in life arouses admiration: such a man is immortal. Eliakom was declared a good man at the bottom: his surname, "The Fly," was heard no more.

Among the guests invited to the reception party was Samuel, the tenor singer. He refused at first to accept the invitation, but when Eliakom himself came to him begging his pardon for the insult he had offered him, and tendering him the sum of thirty rubles, the largest amount he could have earned at Solomon's wedding, Samuel yielded, saying that "he could not deny his Jewish nature." He took the money, pardoned the offense, and came to the party. The guests were highly pleased with the arrangements, and were delighted with Samuel, the tenor, who sang the finest songs and displayed his choicest slight-of-hand tricks to entertain them. Solomon's bride showed herself a good housewife and very amiable. The young couple were congratulated on all hands and received many marks of respect, the entertainment passed off most satisfactorily. When the guests were ready to take leave of the host, he addressed them in the following terms:

"I was very much gratified to see you under my roof; I thank you for your kind visit and earnestly beg of you to

pardon that former course of life for which I had become so notorious among you. I do not intend to keep myself withdrawn from the community in the future, as I have done hitherto, and I hope that none of you will hereafter forget me whenever there is need of a true friend. My son is going to stay with his father-in-law for five years, and then, if I live so long, I purpose to give up my business into his hands and to retire into private life. If God pleases to keep me alive and send me the help I am most in need of, I will then endeavor to make my house even more agreeable to you all than I can possibly at present."

"Except to myself," interrupted the artist, "for I hope by that time to be settled as minister with some respectable congregation far from Oshmiana."

"Never mind that," rejoined Eliakom with a smile; "if such be the case. I will then bring you here at my own expense."

XI.

TRANSFIGURATION.

FIVE years expired after the occurrences narrated above, and during that time Eliakom did not swerve from the resolution he had taken on his return from the wedding of his son. The appellation "Fly" was accordingly substituted by the more respectable surname "The Nadib," or generous one. Eliakom's life and deportment were so entirely reformed that it was impossible to recognize the former "Fly" in

the present "Nadib." The astonishment which was caused by Eliakom's first generous act, gave place to a feeling of respect for him, and finally he came to be considered the worthiest man in the community. People spoke of him with a feeling of sincere esteem, and the deepest sympathy was engendered in his behalf when an expression of sorrow and anxiety was noticed in his face. The cause of his unhappiness was the morsel of blood-soaked bread which the Baal-Shem had failed to wrest from Satan. The holy man had given the assurance that it would be returned unto him if his works "were acceptable before the Lord." It had not yet been returned—hence his anxiety.

Solomon returned to Oshmiana with his wife and two children. He had become a good business man, thanks to the training received from his father-in-law, and had succeeded in accumulating a small capital of his own, which he now intended to invest in his father's business. Arrangements were made for a party to be given in celebration of his succession to his father's business. Invitations were sent to all friends and a letter was dispatched to Samuel the tenor, who for three years had been the minister of a respectable congregation in Kovno.

On the appointed evening all the guests were in attendance, all except Samuel, who in reply to Eliakom's kind invitation had written that "he was not certain whether his official duties would allow him to absent himself from Kovno for a whole week (it was about two days' journey from Oshmiana.) He would try to obtain leave from his congregation, but in case he did not succeed, he begged Eliakom not to be disappointed. He sends his best wishes, etc."

When the whole party were sitting around the well-spread table, Eliakom and Nahum presiding, the door opened and a feeble old man entered the room saluting the guests most courteously. Eliakom and Nahum immediately recognized in him their benefactor, the Baal-Shem, and welcomed him with the greatest respect. The old man took the seat that was offered him, gravely blest all present, drank a glass of wine, and finally asked the host whether he could spare a few minutes for a private interview. Of course, he could. He offered to take the holy man into another room. The Baal-Shem asked whether there was no room in the house the windows of which opened toward "the East, as such a place would be the best suited for his purpose. There was such a room, and Eliakom took his benefactor into it with a palpitating heart. The holy man looked around him with an air of satisfaction, and addressed Eliakom:

"I came here to accomplish the work which I commenced for the benefit of thy soul five years ago. Now comes the question whether thou dost feel thyself able to continue in the way of righteousness? Remember that thou hast sworn by the Holy Law to act in conformity with thy promise, *no matter what thy future experience may be.*"

Eliakom asserted that he would not give up his present ways for all the riches in the world, even if he had not taken the oath alluded to. That he would have been a happy man for the last five years, but for "the evidence which Satan still preserved" against him—that had been giving him great anxiety. The Baal-Shem was pleased

with the answer, and wished to be left alone for half an hour, after which Eliakom should return with Nahum and two of his guests. At the expiration of the half hour Eliakom came into the room again with the other persons that had been named, and found the holy man standing at the window apparently in deep meditation. The Baal-Shem did not hear them entering, and remained in the same attitude for some time; they observed him with silent reverence. Suddenly he turned to them saying:

"The time is come. Eliakom-bar-Daniel, art thou here?"

Eliakom stepped nearer, and, at the old man's dictation, uttered a solemn promise to pursue the path of charity and righteousness which he had adopted and had been walking in for five years; all present said "Amen." They were then all ordered into a remote corner of the room and urged not to be frightened at what they would see. The Baal-Shem pronounced some mystic words, and suddenly the peasant's ghost, now no longer soiled with blood, appeared in the window, and glided into the room. The holy man ordered it to give up its evidence, and it complied without resistance. It was then about to depart, but was directed to remain. The holy man handed the piece of bread to Eliakom, then went to the open window, and turning around in some peculiar manner he became transformed into another person. It was no more the feeble old man who had come here, it was now the dexterous stranger from Jerusalem who faced the astonished beholders. The metamorphosed guest drew a pocket-book from his bosom, and handing it to Nahum, said in Hebrew with the Sephardaic accent:

"Here is the money which the Baal-Shem received from you for the restoration of the stolen silver. I did not intend to commit a theft; I only wanted to teach you to be more careful in your dealings with 'pious men,' who too often take advantage of your credulity. Besides that, I had to do it to aid the Baal-Shem in his miracles and to bring you to him." Having said this he made a sign to the peasant, who instantly was transfigured into a gendarme, and said to Eliakom in the Russian language:

"The twenty-five rubles which I received from you, I spent on the two cripples on whom the Baal-Shem had performed his first miracles in the village. I was so ordered by Samuel the tenor, by whose instruction I had acted as a peasant, and had received three blows from you, the force of which I felt for a whole week afterward."

"But where, in the name of heaven, is Samuel?" exclaimed Eliakom. "Oh, what a fool I was! I understand it all now, and would like to see him."

"He was afraid to come here," said the gentleman from Jerusalem, lest upon seeing him you should be provoked to break your oath."

"What does he think of me!" cried Eliakom. "Am not I Israelite enough not to perjure myself in such a manner? Far from being angry, I feel indebted to him for the good lesson he has taught me. Let him come and be welcome."

"And I," said Nahum, "will never forget what I owe to the man who worked so ingeniously and with such success for the welfare of our children. Let him come and receive the thanks he deserves."

"He is very glad to hear you speak like that," rejoined Samuel, who was none other than the man in oriental attire.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

THE illustration of the stranger from Jerusalem is not overdrawn. Villainies of this kind are of very frequent occurrence in Lithuania and other places where superstition is strong. Such practitioners as have either lived for some time in Jerusalem, or have come in contact with Oriental Israelites and learned their manners, very often assume the title of "Messengers from the Holy Land," and collect money under false pretenses, or simply help themselves in whatever way they can; their oriental manners being a sufficient warrant for high estimation among their credulous dupes. Some practitioners of this kind have recently tried their skill in this city; but they have been checked in their enterprise by some well-meaning persons. I can not refrain from giving the editor of the "*Jewish Times*" the credit for the interest he has taken in the matter, and for opening his columns to those who chose to unmask the hypocrites before the public. Here is a correspondence which has been published in the "*Jewish Times*" of Nov. 10th, 1871:

THE MUTUAL DEATH INSURANCE COMPANY.

RABBI SAUL BENJAMIN KAHANA, OF JERUSALEM,

President of the Board of Directors.

MR. EDITOR: Herewith I send you the circular of a newly-founded and very peculiar business association, and I most earnestly request you to publish the following explanation thereof, so that all the deceased friends and relatives of your readers may lose none of its offered benefits.

The association in question has proposed to provide for any person, who has died since the beginning of the world, a sufficient quantity of *Kaddish*, *El-male-rachmim*, *Mi Sheberach*, of every sort and description, and even of prayers at the "western wall" of the ruined temple of Jerusalem, for the moderate consideration of three dollars a year per soul, this premium to be paid by such among the living as desire these benefits for their departed friends.

A paragraph or two quoted entire from the constitution, will furnish, I think, a clearer insight into the matter:

Sec. 1. "Every person, *without distinction of sex or age*, is entitled to become a member of this organization, provided he is willing to pay a monthly due of *no less* than twenty-five cents to the funds of the society."

Sec. 4. "Every member is entitled to procure for his deceased friends or relatives the benefits of this society, provided he pays the respective dues (for each soul) as long as he lives; and this is a great favor and benefit to both the proposer and proposed." The last sentence of this section deserves the acknowledgments of all humanity.

Sec. 6. declares that "it will be open for every one, viz., Pharisees, Chassidim (names of denominations), Chebron, Zefath, and Tiberia (names of places) without distinction."

This clearly illustrates the liberal principles on which the organization is based, and at the same time it opens for the society such a vast field of action, as has never been open before to any business organization in the world. Just consider, Mr. Editor, the number of souls which have departed from this world since the time of Abel, and which, without distinction of sex, age, nationality, or creed, may become members of this society! It is incalculable.

This curious and unique invention in the way of insurance business is worthy of its author, the illustrious rabbi and President of the Board of Directors, and beats all that has been done till now by your boastful American speculators.

Besides its infinite field of action, this association is exempted from many disadvantages under which life insurance associations

labor, viz., the directors need not be of financial reputation, nor need they invest any capital to secure credit for their enterprise, for everybody knows that the "benefits" which they offer can be procured for nothing. Neither need they invest much labor, or employ clerks at high salaries, for their chief duty is to take care of clients who are, or will be, in the "realms beyond" our little globe; and what man, however active or industrious, was ever able to do as much?

Alas, that the most sacred feelings of our Orthodox co-religionists should be turned to such advantage by a set of miserable scoundrels!

The two so-called rabbis from Jerusalem were checked in their first enterprise (see *Jewish Times*, of July 14). They claimed to be authorized to collect money for the religious establishments in Jerusalem; but they were declared barefaced swindlers by the most prominent rabbis of that city in the Hebrew periodical, *Chabazeteth*, as well as by a correspondent in the *Israelit*, of Mainz, and by letters sent to some of the most prominent Israelites of this city. Their courage, however, never failed them, and "the Mutual Death Insurance Co." is the new flag under which they are sailing, in the hope of cheating the last cent out of the pockets of the poor peddlers and glaziers of New York. They have named their society *Ez Chaim*, the Tree of Life. Does it not sound like devilish mockery? They may also reckon on some success, for they know well with whom they have to deal: the objects of their villainy is a benighted class, who read no newspapers, and will never accept the testimony of beardless men against such long-bearded saints.

Mr. K. H. Sarasohn refused to participate in their scheme, after he had become convinced of their true character, and they have found a new champion of a less scrupulous and more boisterous character in the person of a certain Mr. Morris Alexander.

Here the reader my ask if there are no men of honesty and common sense among those on whom these parasites are preying, and why nothing is done by such men to unmask the hypocrites? In answer to which queries I shall make the following statement:

When I received the circular to which I have referred, and had

perused its contents in the jargon in which it is printed, I immediately started to see Rabbi Moses Ahrenshon, of East Broadway, to learn something nearer of the enterprise. The readers of your paper will perhaps remember that it was this gentleman who provided me with the facts which I laid before them in my article on "Pious Scoundrels," and so I hoped that he could enlighten me on this subject, as well. I found the venerable man sitting, as usual, in his library, with a big, dusty volume on the table before him. The following conversation ensued :

"Good morning, Rabbi; I have not seen you for a long time, and come to inquire after your health."

"Good morning, my son; I really thought you had forgotten my existence," was the kind rejoinder.

Here the old matron, with whom I boast of being in high favor, came out of an adjoining room, sighing and groaning as usual, but always alive to her duties.

"Mr. Gerschuni (so she is pleased to address me) is not the man to forget his friends. How have you been?"

"Why, I am quite well, as you see. I hope you are also well, for you look younger every time I see you. (The old lady is pleased with a compliment now and then.) Is there any news in this quarter?"

The old man made a sign to his wife to keep quiet, and asked me whether I knew of any news; his gesture did not escape my observation, and gave me the idea that he had something on his heart, which he would not like his worthy helpmate to betray to me. I therefore started at once for the object of my visit.

"Yes, Rabbi," I said, "I have heard strange sounds in the air, and have come here to get some information from you about their nature. Do you know anything of this?" and I handed him the circular.

"Of course, I know about it, but you are the last person to whom I would like to speak about it; to say the truth, I am sorry you ever became aware of it."

"Why, Rabbi, have you no more confidence in me, or do you think it can do me harm if I know of it? I beg to differ with you

on the last point. The whole affair looks like a "Death Insurance Company," and I was thinking about procuring its benefits for the souls of Baruch Spinoza and Heinrich Heine. Can you not tell me what were the names of their mothers?"

The old man laughed heartily at my joke, and his wife wanted me to explain to her what funny thing I had said, that she might participate in her husband's mirth. I gave her an explanation which made the Rabbi laugh more and louder, and helped me in carrying my point, for my raillery gave a different turn to the dispostion of the venerable man, and he became more willing to talk to me about what I wanted to know.

"I did not want you to learn anything about the schemes of these men, for I was afraid you would publish the facts; and the blame would be put on me, and I would have to suffer for it more than I suffered for the publication of your first article about them."

"Why, did they really cause you trouble? I am indeed sorry to hear it, but you know it is not my fault; you requested me to write it."

"God bless you, my son, I do not blame you at all; of course, you acted as I requested you to do. But these men have paid me for it. They combined with Mr. Streisand, who is a bird of the the same feathers with them and pronounced anathema on me. Then they placed agents near the door of my house and every man who wanted to consult me on some religious matter, or hire a seat in my place of worship for the ensuing festivals, was addressed in the street, and informed that I am under anathema, and that it is unlawful for any good Israelite to have anything to do with me. You know what a *Cherem* is, and can imagine what an effect it had. And to crown all their proceedings they have drawn into their council one of my bitterest enemies, a wine-merchant, whose wine I declared some time ago improperly prepared, and have persuaded him to bring a suit against me which has cost me alredy more than I can afford, and God knows what will be the end of it. Besides that, Mr. Morris Alexander sent up his worthy helpmate to insult me for my proceedings, and when I left the room to avoid her, she raised a frightful uproar. She actually beat my poor wife. Now,

these are the reasons why I am afraid of these men, and why I did not want you to write anything more about them. I request you, therefore, not to do it, for my sake."

I assured the poor old man that if I wrote anything about them, I would take good care that it should be known that I did it of my own accord, and that the blame rests this time entirely on my shoulders.

I think the above statement gives a clear idea of the base weapons which these scoundrels use against the more honest of their Orthodox brethren. In my next I propose to illustate the character of their dupes, as well as their moral sentiments. I hope it will make an interesting cloumn for some of your readers.

HENRY GERSONI.

METAMORPHOSE OF A LITHUANIAN BOY.

PART FIRST.

AS TOLD BY HIMSELF.

I.

MY FIRST SECRET.

ONE fine summer's morning I was strolling along Zarietchy street, a narrow thoroughfare in Wilna, with a volume of the Talmud under my arm. A friend, by the name of Joshua, met me, and the following conversation took place:

"Well, Joseph," said he, "I was just going to the Beth-Hamedrash to see you."

"And I am going home to take tea," I rejoined "What do you want of me?"

"O, you cat-headed fellow,"* my friend exclaimed, "have you forgotten that you agreed to go with me to Mr. L.'s to-day?"

* The cat, according to the Talmud, (Horioth, fol. 13, a.) is the most forgetful animal. Hence the appellation "cat-headed" for any one that has a bad memory. The Lithuanian Jewish dialect abounds with such expressions.

"For heaven's sake do not speak so loud! There is my father coming right behind me. Wait for me on the lawn by the synagogue; I shall join you within an hour." And I turned from him abruptly without another word. Soon afterward I was joined by my aged father.

"You are going home for refreshment, I suppose," my father said. "Come, I shall tell mother to prepare an omelet for you. You deserve such a treat for your diligent study to-day; your teacher told me that you acquitted yourself finely." He took me by the hand and we proceeded homeward. But before we arrived he suddenly asked me what Joshua had wanted of me, and then he warned me, perhaps for the tenth time, to have nothing to do with that boy.

Joshua was a bright, good-natured fellow. His father was dead, and his mother, fearing lest he should be drafted into the army, sent him to the Rabbinical seminary, the pupils of that institution being exempted from military duties. According to the settled convictions of all "pious" Jews, saving children in that way from the army is simply preserving them to become renegades, inasmuch as profane languages and sciences are taught in the seminary. This was the reason why my father did not want me to associate with Joshua; he was afraid that I too would be influenced by modern ideas.

But I liked Joshua; he was a warm friend of mine. We studied under one teacher before he had the misfortune of becoming a student of modern knowledge. He was a more advanced scholar, older and stronger than I. He always protected me against the assaults of the boys dur-

ing the time we studied in the '*Heder*.* Everybody spoke well of him at that time, and everybody knew also that he did not become a student at the seminary through choice. Now, I could not understand why I should shun his company because of his misfortunes.

Arriving at home my father praised me before my mother and sister, and ordered the promised omelet. I enjoyed the honors and the meal exceedingly, for I always liked to be praised a little, and to have an omelet with my tea. During the meal I informed my father that I intended to go and see my old teacher, and that I would stay in his Beth-Hamedrash for the afternoon and evening services. Presently I was provided by my mother with three *kopeeks*, and my sister gave me a cake and a kiss, and off I started to the synagogue lawn.

I found Joshua waiting, and immediately informed him that I must be at my old teacher's Beth-Hamedresh for the afternoon service. We started on our errand at a quick pace; for there was not much time at my disposal. On my way I treated Joshua with the cake which my sister had given me. He was pleased at my kindness, said I was a good fellow, and called my sister an angel with dark eyes and black hair. The last seemingly trifling remark had very serious consequences and was perhaps the hinge on which my life and destiny turned. I had intended asking my friend about the character and appearance of the renowned Hebrew poet to whom I was going to be introduced. It may be that I never would have

* '*Heder*' is a sort of private school exclusively for teaching Jewish lore.

had the courage to approach this man, had I previously been better informed concerning him. But Joshua's flattering remark about my sister, whom I loved dearly and was very proud of, made me forget my proposed inquiries. I spoke about her alone until we reached the house toward which we were going, and there was no more time to ask questions.

Joshua knocked at the door, and it was quickly opened by a servant girl. We went in and were ushered into a dark ante-chamber to wait until the host should wish to see us. Here I became silent and thoughtful, my mind wandering off in quite an unusual direction. I had always had a notion that a man who wrote *songs* and was reputed to be an Epicores,* ought to be a young man in a short coat,† with long trowsers, skipping around the yard or playing on the lawn with others like himself; and thus I expected to find Mr. L. engaged. I thought he would meet us laughing, play some trick upon Joshua, or make some funny remarks about myself, and then we would become friends. He would tell me how to compose "Hebrew songs," for which I would treat him with apples or cakes. Imagine my astonishment when I saw Mr. L. lived in a neat house, (with becoming window curtains!) and that I was left in a dark ante-chamber to wait until he should wish to see me, as if the man was the physician of our city and no Israelite at all. I became very nervous. I

* Such is the appellation of irreligious men of learning.

† Pious people must wear coats that reach the heels and breeches just long enough to cover the knees, where they meet the hose-garter and are tied.

could not hear what Joshua was whispering to me, and would have run away if there had been time; but a door opened and a venerable old man with a tall and stately figure appeared and called Joshua to enter with his friend. I no longer knew where I was, and hardly noticed how I came to stand presently in a tidy little study before the same old man, who was now seated at a writing desk strewn with papers. I think Joshua pinched me to recall me to my senses.

"Rabbi," said he advancing, "this is my friend Joseph, of whom I spoke to you yesterday at school."

The aged man fixed his thoughtful eyes upon me; and the book-shelves with the huge volumes, the inscriptions on the walls, the windows, ceiling, floor and the Rabbi himself with his desk, commenced to turn around me in such wild confusion that I clung fast to the door-knob lest I should be drawn into the whirl.

"Why, you seem to be afraid of me!" said the old man in a soothing voice. "Step nearer, my son, and compose yourself." He drew me nearer to his seat and put his hand upon my shoulder. I still felt the penetrating glance of his eye, but his kind words and the gentle touch of his hand allayed my nervousness. I could look up into his mild face.

"Where do you reside?" he resumed. "Your family is well known to me, and your name I have learned from Joshua."

Here my courage was completely restored. If the man knows my family he must know also that I am *a Jachsen*, (of good extraction) and an *Illuy*, (excellent young scholar) of which I always felt proud.

"In Zarietchy street," I replied.

"And you have walked all the way hither? It is no wonder you look so exhausted. Take a seat, my boy, and talk to me freely. Why did you not salute me when you came in?"

I felt ashamed, and thought the true reason would be my best excuse.

"I beg your pardon for that, Rabbi; but I was so confused that I could not utter a word to save my life."

"So I supposed, and I am pleased to hear you speak to the purpose. Joshua told me that you are a good boy and that you study well. Do you know anything of the Bible?"

I did not know the meaning of the word "Bible," and when I was told that it was the name of the "twenty-four" canonical books, I said that I knew the Pentateuch and the Psalms. He asked me next what I knew of the Talmud, and I commenced to recount with joyful pride all the chapters that I had studied in the various volumes*—over one hundred and fifty folio sheets. But what was my astonishment when I noticed Mr. L.'s countenance (a thoroughly Rabbinical one) gradually assumed as sad an expression as though he were hearing some distressing story. Other rabbis used to listen with delight to my

*Beginners do not study the Talmud consecutively. Easy chapters are generally selected to suit and develope the abilities of the student. This method is pursued until the pupil is able to "read"—that is, to understand a page of the text with its commentaries without assistance, after which a regular course is taken up.

achievements in this line. I surmised that he was growing tired of me, and said:

"Rabbi, if I am troublesome, I would rather go."

"No, my child. What makes you think so?"

"Well, I see you look so sad." The old man smiled and brushed back the hair which was hanging in disorder over my forehead. I was nearly moved to tears by his kindness.

"No, my boy," he said thoughtfully, "I am not tired of you, and if I look sad, as you say, it is because I am sorry for you and for the whole class of which you are a specimen." What reason had he to be sorry for me and for such as are like me? was the first question that was suggested to my mind; but I thought I would rather not ask any questions I would go straight to my object, as soon as the opportunity offered itself.

"Joshua told me," resumed the old man, "that you are anxious to learn the Hebrew tongue. Do you want me to assist you in your studies?"

"Yes, Rabbi, if you please. I heard that you can write the best *Hebrew songs*, and my friend told me that you are a very kind man; I therefore came to request you to instruct me in writing such *songs*, if you please.

The old man was so irritated at my last remark that I was afraid to look at him. His voice revealed his emotion as he asked me hurriedly:

"What fluid do you use for writing, child?"

"Ink, if you please," I answered in a trembling voice.

"Listen, my boy," he continued hoarsely, "you cannot become a writer of such *songs*, as you call them, until you

shall have learned to write with blood! With blood, I say!" he added with deep emphasis, arising from his seat. "Not with the blood of Caparoth,* nor with the blood of any animal that is sacrificed for joyful festivities; no, the blood which we use for writing our songs is that of our own hearts, sometimes diluted with bitter tears. You have an unlucky ambition, my child. To write Hebrew songs, indeed! There were no such songs written for a long, long time. It is true, some of our race tried to write something that should resemble a song, but it was a failure; they did not use the proper fluid. Now we begin again, and we must use our heart's best blood. Go, my boy, take your Gemara (volume of the Talmud) and study it assiduously. You will become a Rabbi, lead a lazy and useless life, pronounce everything wicked except that which brings no good. You may perhaps learn to write songs with the blood of Caparoth and be considered a holy man. But never think of writing such songs as mine."

His face became so flushed, his eyes so sparkling, and his voice so loud as he proceeded, that I was almost frightened to death looking at him and listening to him. I need not add that I did not understand a word of what he said, although I did not lose one syllable of this remarkable outburst. I supposed he must be conjuring up spirits by means of sorcery or Cabala.

Here, to my relief, a stout old gentleman came into the room. His gray beard reached almost to his girdle and

* Caparoth—birds slaughtered the day before the day of Atonement and originally regarded as substitutes for sacrifices; but subsequently many superstitious ideas became imbued in the practice.

his dress was the usual long wide coat, known by the name of *supez*, with a broad-brimmed, low cylinder hat. The only peculiarities about him were polished boots and cleanliness of dress, which seldom belong to a Talmud-bred Rabbi.

"Good afternoon, Beril," the visitor said to the illustrious poet, noticing Joshua and myself only with a passing look. "Are you again worrying yourself with naughty boys?* I tell you it is no use . . . ."

"No, Hirshel," interrupted the host, "only one of them is a pupil of our school and a very good boy he is too. The other," pointing to me, "is Tobias' son, a boy of eleven years who knows a d——sh lot of Talmud, and is as proud and knowing as a man of forty, so that you see the child in him only when questions of utility arise. He is precisely what the prophet characterized with the words: "Ephraim is like a cake not turned."† He came to ask me for instruction in writing Hebrew songs. I told him how it is I write my songs and advised him to go home and try to provide a new *Machzor* and *Selichoth*‡ for us.

* These two great men, whose names I forbear to mention, took a personal interest in each pupil of the seminary I have mentioned, encouraging or reproving them individually. All the rest of the Jews treated such students with disdain.

†This verse occurs in Hosea viii, 7. and is a most expressive figure, characterizing a mind that is over-ripe in some respects, and utterly undeveloped in others.

‡ Machzor and Selichoth—Books of chants and hymns, the first for every festival in the whole year round (which is indicated by the name Machzor from *chazar* to revolve or turn around); the latter containing hymns to be recited before the morning prayers during the first and last weeks of the year—chants and hymns that

He comes from a stock that can do it, you know. Please talk to him a little, I must breathe the fresh air for a few minutes for I am grieved to death." Saying which he left the room.

The visitor took a seat and puffing and blowing he unbuttoned his coat, disclosing a long woolen *zizith*,* hanging from under his waistcoat. Having rested himself a little, he called me nearer to him, took me between his knees and commenced questioning me about my family with the interest of an old acquaintance. He then wanted me to recite something from the Talmud—a thing I refused to do, assigning as a cause that it would make Mr. L. even angrier than he was; my real reason was of quite a different nature. But he managed me so well, that before I knew it, I was involved in a talmudical discussion with him, and I was so interested that I even forgot the host, who had returned and quietly resuming his seat was listening to our argument. After a while I remarked that it was nearly time for the afternoon service and that I would have to go. The host took a small Bible from the shelf and presented it to me, advising me to read it as much as I possibly could, never to stop at any difficult passage but always to go ahead trying to retain in my memory as many as possible of the passages I understood, and reading the whole book through every month if I could. I remonstrated that we had at home the whole

more or less invoke forgiveness, wherefore the book is called *Selichoth* from *solach*, to forgive.

*Zizith—The dress to which the *Show-threads* are attached; otherwise called *Arba-Canpoth*. on account of its having *four corners*.

"twenty-four," with the commentaries of Mezudoth; that I had no need of the book; but the old man wanted me to take it and said that the commentaries of *Mezudoth* were precisely those which would do me the least good. I finally took the Bible and hurriedly left the house, forgetting even to thank him for the present.

As soon as Joshua and I were in the street, he said to me:

"You are a lucky fellow, Joseph; my purpose in introducing you to Mr. L. was simply to show you that he is altogether different from what people believe him to be. I little imagined that he would take a liking to you; but it seems he has done it; and what is more, Mr. K. himself was evidently pleased with you."

Mr. K.? was that the gentleman who wanted me to recite a passage in the Talmud? I never heard of him before."

"O, you fool!" exclaimed Joshua with indignation. "I wonder how people can ever take an interest in such an ignoramus as you are! You did not know that 'Bible' means the 'twenty-four,' and most probably you are not aware that Mr. K. is the renowned Rabbi Hirshel Simches, the inspector of our seminary."

"Rabbi Hirshel Simches! Good Lord! I know more about him than you think! But now I must take the way to my old teacher. We will talk more about this incident to-morrow between the afternoon and evening services.

Joshua turned into another street, and, left to myself, I sank into a deep revery. The scenes I had attended had been very novel to me. The noble and imposing appearance

of the great poet were the very reverse of the conception I had formed of his person and manner. His mysterious language, and his sudden anger contrasted strangely with his general kindness and thoughtfulness. Of Mr. K., too, I had entertained a very different notion. His name was often mentioned in our house, for he had stood in business relations with my father some twenty years before, and often had I heard them comment on his deep learning and doubtful orthodoxy. I had always imagined that he must look fearfully shabby, and must behave very harshly toward religious folks. And then Mr. L.'s advice about reading the Bible—what a funny name it seemed to me for the "Holy twenty-four!"—And the small book which had been given to me, what was I to do with it? I could not possibly take it home, for how could I tell my father where I obtained it! In addition to these things, imagine the consciousness of having done something that was in open violation of the wishes of my parents, and the fear lest they should become aware of it; and you will have some estimate of how I felt when I arrived at the Beth-Hamedrash of my old teacher. But new emotions were in store for me there.

II.

THE BETH-HAMEDRASH IN TWILIGHT.

"I AM glad to see that you remember me and that you are well," my old teacher addressed me, when he saw me coming; "but you look so tired, Joseph."

"No, I am not tired, Rabbi; I like to see you as often as you and my parents permit me to come here."

The Batei-Medrashim in Wilna, as in every other city in Russian-Poland are provided with libraries of Talmudical and casuistic Rabbinical works, for the benefit of those who devote their time to such studies. Usually these places serve also the purpose of synagogues where service is held thrice every day. They are maintained by the seatholders or patrons. In every Beth-Hamedrash there are three or more men whose sole occupation it is to study; they are also maintained by the seatholders. These students or *Bachurim*, as they are generally called, dine each day at the table of another patron, they reside in the Beth-Hamedrash, on the benches of which they form their beds by night. My old teacher had become such a Bachur in his old age after he could no longer perform the functions of a teacher. But the Beth-Hamedrash which he had chosen for his abode did not very well correspond with his character and fame.

The patrons (or Baalei-Batim, as seatholders are commonly called,) of this Beth-Hamedrash were known as men who did not discard modern knowledge; and though it was rumored that their sexton spoke irreverently of the Sohar,* and that some of their Bachurim were studying grammar and modern languages they did not discharge their sexton, nor did they reprove the Bachurim. My teacher, when asked why he chose this Beth-Hamedrash for his dwelling, instead of some other which enjoyed a better

*A book of cabilistic commentaries on the Pentateuch.

reputation, said that he did not care about the doings of others and that this place suited him best, as there were such books as he required, and on account of its being a quiet place and affording him the rest he needed.

About the time of the afternoon service the Beth-Hamedrash usually presents a lively appearance. The seatholders coming in, some to pray, others to study an hour or so before or after services. The Bachurim pursue their studies louder than usual in order to show themselves diligent before their patrons. Between the afternoon and evening services a lecturer reads the Bible with commentaries to the people. But while he is reading and explaining, others are pursuing their own studies, and it becomes a hard task for the lecturer to speak in the midst of such confusion. One could see him sitting at the table talking and gesticulating to the ten or fifteen around him, but could scarcely hear a single word even in his immediate vicinity.

In the Beth-Hamedrash of my teacher no one was permitted to study aloud during the delivery of the lecture. Their lecturer was a man of great eloquence, liked much by the younger generation, but very unpopular with the older people, for he was reputed to be a *Maskil;* that is, a man who confines himself not only to the laws (written or traditional), but who turns his mind also to the pursuit of other knowledge. In fact, Rabbi Chaim Rumshishker's sermons and lectures, though they seldom failed to make the desired impression on the hearts of his hearers, were disapproved of by the more pious and Talmud-trained scholars. "Why," the last would say, "all his similes and illustrations are taken from the German or Russian books,

and his arguments are all after the manner of modern inquiring philosophy, which almost desecrates the subject of which it treats." But they would listen to him nevertheless, as they said, "for the sake of criticising," but the fact was his lectures were instructive and it was a pleasure to hear him.

"Have you ever heard Chaim Rumshishker?" my teacher asked.

"No," I said; "when he was, not long ago, invited to deliver a sermon in our Beth-Hamedrash, my father told me that it would be more profitable for me to stay at home and study my lessons than to hear him; and I acted in accordance with his suggestions."

"Well then, you can hear him here, and tell your father that I permitted you to do so."

There was no more time for conversation. The sexton rapped on the table, which was the signal for the service to be begun. In the middle of the service the lecturer came into the house followed by a number of his admirers. He was a gentleman of a dark complexion and very expressive countenance. The most remarkable feature in his face was his eyes. I never in my life saw such a pair of eyes. They were of extraordinary size and so black, so burning, and restlessly turning in their sockets, that one could only form an idea of the impression they made having seen them. By themselves they might be taken as an indication of the most dangerous character, but together with the sympathetic countenance and furrowed face of their owner, his loose black hair, his round beard, and lips always curled in a good-natured smile, when he was

not in the pulpit, these eyes could not fail to impart the idea that there stood before you an energetic thinker who could sympathize with you and love you; they caused you to court his good disposition, but for all the world they made you dread being rebuked by that man. Imagine such features with a tall and slender figure wrapped in a long orleance coat, with a somewhat shabby cylinder on his head and you have the live Chaim Rumshishker before you.

During the loud recitation of Sh'monah-Esreh, (Litany) my teacher took me to the table where the lecturer was to sit and gave me a seat not far from him, requesting the two gentlemen between whom I was placed not to incommode me. After the service, the lecturer took his seat and all in the house crowded around the table. The sexton distributed Bibles, and the sixth chapter of Micha was announced for the text. During the lecture the house became crowded to its utmost capacity and all the windows had to be thrown open.

The lecturer gave a preliminary sketch of the magnanimity of God, and of the importance of Israel as the race which was chosen to carry forth His truth into the world. He described how the Israelites "grew fat and kicked," how they acted not in accordance with God's will. Being destined to teach morality and truth to the human race, they also were obliged to set a good example to all other nations, but they did not. They "rebelled against the Lord and his commandments." It was high treason. Their inspired men understood that grave consequences would follow and tried to open the eyes of the people. The

prophet Micha comes before the people laden with such thoughts, and announces that a great trial is about to take place. The majestic mountains and hills, and the mighty foundations of the world are summoned as judges and jurors. The plaintive is the Lord and the defendant—Israel.

After such an introduction the people are prepared to hear from the prophet the severest charges against them and subsequently perhaps some apologies for their evil deeds. But the prophet is determined not to let their thoughts have their own course; he is aware of the sentiments he has awakened in their hearts, and leaving them for a while to their reflections, he startles them with a new and unexpected feature of illustration. He brings the complainant before them. But instead of the mighty Lord at whose word the severest judgment is expected, he appears in the character of an aged father, tenderly reproving and admonishing his naughty child. The people are astonished, their attention is riveted to every word uttered by the prophet; he addressed them in the name of God with the endearing appellation "my people," and brings forward all the goodness of the Lord in a most touching manner. They are moved to tears of gratefulness when they hear such kind words instead of the grave charges which they expected; the prophet knows their sentiments, it is just what he wanted to call forth. He stimulates them to the highest degree, assuming the character of one of his hearers, he exclaims, "What could be returned for all these manifold goodness of God? Thousands of sacrifices? Myriads of oil rivers? The offering up of ob-

jects which are dearest to man's heart, his first-born, the fruits of his body? No, nothing of the kind is required of them. Man may enjoy all the blessings he has if he will but do justice, love mercy and walk morally before the Lord." Could there be any more practical teaching given with a better effect?

The lecturer went on in this strain, carrying the imagination of his audience with him; his clear and impressive voice echoed through the building, and many a heart heaved sobs and groans. As for me, child as I was, I understood every word he uttered, so clear was his expression. I was nearly choked with my tears at first, and my little Bible bears the marks of those tears which I could swallow no longer. He concluded with a disquisition on the imagination in general, the nature of poetry and the incomparable illustrations of the prophets in particular. He drew the lines between different characters of speech, prose, song, poetry and prophecy; the last was, according to his ideas, a combination of the most glowing imagination, profound knowledge of the state and character of the people, prompted by the greatest sympathy and love for them, with a sagacious foreknowledge of their fate. Such a fortunate combination of feeling, knowledge and eloquence, is the highest spiritual gift God ever vouchsafed to man; it is the very *Holy inspiration.*

I never in my life said my prayers more fervently than I did the evening prayers after this lecture. I felt that a crisis was wrought within me and that I needed assistance of God in my future undertakings. I anticipated that the Talmudical wisdom which was hammered into my mind

was not of the kind to teach me the right understanding even of the holy "twenty-four." Why, a few hours before if any one had opened a Bible at the VIth chapter of Micha and would have asked me whether I understood it, I certainly would have answered in the affermative, seeing that there are no difficult passages in all that chapter : and now I saw how far I was from understanding it. I suspected even that the Pentateuch and the Psalms which I had gone through with a teacher, were not understood by me in the right manner. O, if I only could get a teacher like Chaim Rumshishker!

After the evening service was over my old teacher said to me:

"Why, Joseph, you were prepared to hear the lecture: you brought your own Bible along."

I stammered something to the effect that the Bible was not mine, that some friend gave it to me to keep it for him; but I could not maintain the deceit and confessed everything to the old man. Seeing that he did not reproach me severely for my proceedings, I even ventured to ask his advice what I was to do with this book as I would not have my father know of my interview with L. My teacher said nothing, but required me to give him the Bible, which I did with some reluctance, only because of his imperative gesture. He questioned me a good deal about the particulars of my interview with the illustrious poet, and maintained such a serious and thoughtful expression that I dared not to ask him the explanations I desired to have about the poet's remarks.

He informed me then that he would go with me to my

father. I begged him not to betray me, but he answered nothing. On our way from the Beth-Hamedrash I suffered the greatest agony for fear of what my teacher might say to my parents, but when we arrived in the house and I saw that my two elder brothers were there I felt relieved, for I thought it impossible that the old man should disparage me before my brothers.

The teacher told my father that he had kept me in his Beth-Hemedrash, and had allowed me to hear Chaim Rumshishker, and praising me for the attention with which I had listened to the lecture and for my great emotion on his admonitions, he bluntly asked my father what he intended to make of me.

"Why, a scholar to be sure."

"That is right, a scholar he shall be, but you know, Tobias, Joseph has a mind of his own. Ordinary instruction would not do for him. If kept on in the ordinary course of Talmud study, he will be apt to take to other subjects of his own accord and in his own way, which would not be quite the thing we want.

"You really frighten me, Judel," my father said. "Have you discovered any traits of such a character in my boy? He is always so patient and obedient that I can hardly suspect him capable of taking a course which would displease us."

"Never mind that," resumed the teacher. "Joseph is an excellent boy, but nevertheless he must be trained in a different manner. How would it be, for instance, if I would undertake to read with him *Siphrei Mussar?* * I

*Books of Ethics and admonition.

would do it with pleasure thrice a week and would not require any remuneration."

My brothers commenced to remonstrate that I was too young for such subjects; that I must be kept exclusively at the Talmud for at least two years longer, until my intellectual faculties would become cultivated and sharpened. I could then study such books by myself and appreciate their contents in the right way. But the teacher argued that dry, intellectual study would tire me if there were nothing agreeable to the heart intermixed with it, and he carried his point. My father gave his consent to my studying Siphrei Mussar three times a week, and appointed a generous remuneration for the teacher, saying: "I do not want anybody to do a thing for me or for my children for nothing, as long as I can afford to pay for it. You are worth especial thanks, Judel, for the interest you take in my boy."

Before leaving our house the old teacher said to me:

"Now, Joseph, you are to study some nice things with me, but mind, be regular in coming to your lessons. Here I have a present for you," taking out of his bosom my little Bible and handing it to me with a significant look. "Take this book and read in it every day a few pages. When you shall have finished, commence it again from the beginning, and if there is anything you do not understand, consult the commentary of Rashi, or ask me for an explanation." He appointed the days when I had to come to him, and went away. There was some discussion afterward, my brother not liking the proceedings nor the advice of the old man; but my parents had great confidence in him, and the matter was settled.

When the house became quiet and my sister sat on my bed to have the usual chat before we fell asleep, I commenced to pour out all my feelings to her. I told her everything I had experienced that eventful day, not omitting a word even of Mr. L.'s conversation, or of the lecture I had heard. The good soul cried and laughed and embraced me by turns. She hit upon the idea that Mr. L. was writing poetry and not songs, and that my bluntness and simplicity made him angry for a moment; but she was quite certain that he reconsidered it afterward and loved me, else why had he made me a present of the Bible. Concerning the "blood of Caparoth," she thought I misconstrued his words; he most prabably wished all those who irritate "the blood of his heart to go a *Caparah*."* The teacher was pronounced the kindest of men in creation for having extri cated me from such a scrape about the little Bible.

It was resolved that I should sometimes go to see the illustrious poet, secretly of course. If he should still be angry with me, she would go to him and explain my conduct as the result of mere simplicity, and meaning no offense whatever. "For it is bad, you know, to have such a venerable man think bad of you." The Bible I should read together with her in the cellar, lest our parents should see it, for which she would pay me five kopeeks every week.

I need not recite everything that a boy of eleven and a girl of fourteen could devise. Our conversation lasted nearly until daybreak, and when she went to rest I could not

*Wishing a man "to go a Caparah," is the same as wishing him "to suffer for the righteous."

sleep. My thoughts were wandering. When the morning dawned, I had before me the Beth-Hamedrash in twilight, with Chaim Rumshishker's big eyes revolving in their sockets like live coals. Mr. B. L. sometimes patting him on the shoulders, and sometimes leading me in some dark forest, all bespattered with the blood of Caparoth; his own big heart hanging on an old oak and dripping with blood on the pages of my little Bible. My old teacher smiling to me, and telling me not to be afraid. My parents looking at me indifferently, as if I were a stranger to them, and my beloved sister coming to meet me, kissed me, whispering: "Joseph, it is nearly eight o'clock; you must rise for morning prayers," which I actually did.

I was awakened to my duties: to attend service and study Gemara, but somehow or other the last task was not pursued with the usual good will. My old teacher himself said last night that it was too dry a subject for me. Why was I not instructed in the Bible? What kind of nice books will the teacher study with me? On such topics my thoughts were running, and I accomplished very little on that and on the following days.

Sometime afterward, Joshua came and told me that Mr. L. inquired after me, and would be pleased if I came to see him. I went to him, and apologized for my stupidity in having termed his poetry "songs." The poet was much pleased with my statements about the lecture and the proceedings of my old teacher; he advised me to study Hebrew grammar, and to ask him whatever I could not understand. I followed his advice secretly; moreover, I engaged Joshua to teach me the elementary rudiments of the Russian and

German languages as he was taught in the seminary. Nobody knew about these proceedings except my sister, and I kept up so well with the lessons of my talmudical teacher that no suspicion was aroused. All the kopeeks which I obtained from my mother or sister were spent on books, which I kept at Joshua's house. Late night vigils were employed in pursuing my new course of studies.

III.

TOO LATE FOR MENDING.

One of my brothers (Providence had graciously provided six for me before I was sent into this world) in Wilna is a wealthy, industrious man who enjoys a good reputation in the Beth-Hamedrash as a scholar, and in the market as a man of honor and credit. He is a baker by profession, not because he understands anything of that trade—far be it from a son of our family to learn a trade!—If Solomon were to bake bread for his own consumption he would be compelled to live on herbs; but he knows that bread is made of flour, which is nothing else but corn purchased in the market and ground in the mill. This is about all he knows of the baker's trade, and when he has bought the corn and is satisfied that it had been sent down to the mill, he returns peacefully to his Talmud, leaving all the rest of the work to be done under the superintendence of his better half.

Bathy-Hindé, his wife, is a *brave woman* in the true sense of the word. She works from six in the morning till

late at night with a steady regularity which is seldom to be seen in any man or woman. I do not exactly know how Solomon came to his business: but when I had learned to distinguish between a smith and a baker I had the satisfaction of learning that my brother's profession was the latter, and that he kept two ovens at constant work (an oven produces about 1500 pounds of bread in a day). His business gradually increased, and when I left my native land, Solomon had eight ovens at constant work and was a mill-owner; his son-in-law was then engaged as secretary, and the whole business was, as usual, superintended by Bathy. For Solomon would not for a hundred ovens have given up one single hour dedicated to the study of the Talmud, nor would his brave helpmate desire him to do so, for she is as pious as she is brave.

Here is a representation of Solomon's house and establishment.

On one side of the court is the baking establishment, constituted of four large rooms, with two ovens, four workingmen (a dough man and an oven-man for each oven) two boys and the necessary utensils in each room. On the opposite side of the court are the apartments of the baker, five rooms opening one into another. The first room, in which a pair of scales are suspended, is the depository for bread, the second is the counting room, and the other rooms are his residence. In the back-yard there is a depository for wood and a stable for horses.

The morning begins at four o'clock in the room where the produced bread is deposited, the men working at one oven weighing the loafs (a loaf weighs 4 to 27 pounds) one

after another, superintended by a man who is working on another oven, and in another room. At six o'clock the mistress appears and the accounts are handed to her. If it is proved that some bread is wanting, which happens very seldom, the man who is marking the figures, not the one who baked the lot, is made responsible for it; thus it is so arranged that each party has to look out for the exactness of the other. When the mistress receives the lists she adds the summaries and apparently does not pay any attention to the particulars. This work done, she goes through the establishment followed by the men of each department respectively; she examines everything and her orders run like this:

"Ephraim, your dough is too sour, see to it at once. Chaim, your oven is quite cold. At what hour was your second lot produced? At half past two? That won't do; your bread is too warm for being weighed. What is your boy doing there? A sack torn again? If it happens once more I will make you bear the consequences; you ought to see to your sacks before you send them down to the mill. Why, the rye flour has not been brought yet? Send your boy to the miller and tell him if he does not send it by ten o'clock, I will give you a holiday and make him pay for the lost time. Nahum, has your boy seen to the horse? Follow me into the stable. The poor animal is thirsty, has not eaten his oats! Do not work him this forenoon, hire another horse for your purpose; that will make you think more about your poor animal. The wood-store has been locked to-night, that is right. Simchah, you have done your work nicely; I wish they were all like

you," and so forth. As her stately figure makes the round, her mouth, which is apparently formed only to be kissed, is reproving, correcting, threatening and encouraging in such an unparalleled business-like manner.

About 7 o'clock she retires to take tea with her family; there again she is the perfect house-wife, looking to the children's dresses, arranging the table and giving orders to the servant girls about dinner. In the meantime the customers, mostly women, gather in the first room and choose the lots they require. Bathy appears again with her writing materials, the carts stand ready to convey the bread into the stores; she sits and marks the weight of each loaf which is transported. Engaged in this work she notices that the servant girl has not passed through the room with her basket; she stops and calls the girl: "Feigé, do you intend to let us have no dinner to-day? Be quick about your work, I want you to be back from the market at 10 o'clock." Then she retires to the counting room, speaks to those who call on business, arranges her books, goes out to collect bills, and so she is laboring the whole day cheerfully and exactly like a clock-work till the evening, when she becomes again metamorphosed into a perfect house-wife, enjoying the last few hours of the day with her family.

Bathy-Hinde is by no means an ideal woman of the author, nor is this description of her work an exaggeration. She lives and works in this way, as everybody who knows her will testify; but her husband is the baker nevertheless, and in her transactions she never fails to make the people understand that she is responsible to her husband for every kopeek of money.

On Friday the work is stopped about noon-time and every thing is arranged for the Sabbath. The workingmen come in for their wages and are addressed by the mistress with more politeness than on the week-days. A big basket of cut bread with a box of small change is placed in the first room, and one of the children distributes it to a crowd of beggars who come, knowing already what they have to receive there. The door of the next room is left open for the more respectable poor who receive every week something from the hand of the mistress herself. It happens sometimes that the poor in the first room make a noise, quarreling between themselves or being dissatisfied with the gift they receive. On such occasions Bathy is there in a moment: "Now, do not quarrel here, if you please. I don't want my child to hear your rough talking. If my husband hears it he will withhold his gifts."

The following statement will illustrate the sympathies of my sister-in-law, and together with the assertion of my mother that "all the young men of Wilna were in love with Bathy for her beauty and ladylike manners before she became the happy bride of Solomon," the reader will have a complete illustration of a perfect Polish Jewess.

It is the custom of our co-religionists to sing the ode on brave women of the last chapter of Proverbs (from v. 10 to the end) on every Friday evening returning from the synagogue. Once upon such an evening my brother returned home accompanied by two poor scholars whom he invited to participate in his Sabbath-meals. The house was all illuminated and gay, and he was walking to and fro singing the aforementioned ode. He noticed that his

wife, who sat at the well-dressed table reading some book, suddenly dropped the volume, and her eyes were full of tears. He thought that reading the story of Joseph's trials, or Moses' pleading before his death, had touched the heart of his wife. "Now, Bathy," he said, "that won't do. If you will fill my plate, your eyes being full of tears like that, I will not enjoy my meal. It is remarkable about you women, that you can read one and the same story a hundred times and cry over it the last as well as the first time."

"But I was not crying about any story, Solomon; I was thinking of something else."

"Now, what is it that makes you cry on the holy Sabbath, come tell me about it." They went into the next room where I was sitting, my brother addressed me: "Go into another room, Joseph, Bathy has something to tell me."

"No, no, let the boy alone, I can speak to you in his presence. You were singing the ode with such a charming expression and voice, and it occurred to me whether I could ever deserve any such praises. God knows, Solomon, that I do my best to be as dutiful as I can."

Tears in the eyes of the happy husband were the result of this confession: "You are my dear, dear wife!" was all he could utter.

It was about a year after the occurences narrated in the two previous chapters. I was with my mother in Solomon's house on a Saturday night. Another brother and an uncle of mine were there and the entertainment ran in a familiar manner at the tea-table. I was playing with my nieces in another corner of the room, when Solomon called

to me: "Joseph, I hear you are talking with the girls pretty lively, and when somebody speaks to you of something more important, you are short and rather demure in your answers. Come, let us hear how you are getting along with your studies!"

The women drew to one side of the table, a volume, Baba Kama, was taken from the shelf, and I commenced to recite the result of my studies of last week on the treatise of *Z'ruroth*.*

Then I had to undergo the cross questions of my brothers and uncle. We arrived at a point where I could not agree with the opinion of my brothers, and quite a lively discussion was the result. My mother was looking with pride on us all; my sister-in-law was untiring in her pleading that they should "let the boy have some refreshment before they continue to *torture* him;" and my little nieces pressing around me and looking with their dark, sweet eyes all amazed, wondered what this hot controversy might signify; and my uncle, smoking his cigar, asserted that he would "not speak a single word and would see how the young rascal would fight it out against his seniors." I was the hero of the moment, and felt that even my antagonists were inwardly pleased with me, which encouraged me more for the contest.

In the midst of the noise a customer came in. I had the occasion to see him sometimes transacting business with

* It is in the first Perek of the named volume, a treatise on damages done by some animal indirectly: as for instance, a hen shuffling in the ground caused a piece of wood to fly and break something.

Bathy, and observed that he was treated by her with the greatest respect. This time he visited my brother's house as a friend and not on business.

"Hallo! Little Joseph speaking so loud!" he said after the usual salutations; "I always thought that he could not open his mouth."

"Yes, Reb Lippman," Solomon rejoined, "he can when he wants to. Now, this good-for-nothing is contending against us for the last hour and cannot be made to acknowledge his mistake. Would you please hear the subject of our discussion and speak a word with us?"

"Joseph," said the guest, "you must consider well the opinion of your brothers, for they are your seniors, and profound scholars."

"But I can't submit without conviction," said I. "I would not do it even to the opinion of my teacher."

My uncle laughed loud and said it was "a perfect pleasure to hear that rascal talk with such self-reliance." The whole assembly exchanged glances; but I will never forget the expression of my mother's eyes at that moment! The rehearsal began. Mr. Lippman examined, questioned, and spoke *pro* and *con*. The discussion became lively again, and the point was decided by myself having brought forward a new argument in favor of my brother's opinion. My uncle fell to kissing me as ardently as he could; they all kissed me in turn, my mother with tears in her eyes. Mr. Lippman said I was the sharpest boy he ever saw; he was certain that I would become a great man. As for me, I was glad that I could return to play with my nieces.

Some time afterward I was called again and informed

that I would have to leave Wilna for some small town, probably Lida, where I would have to study diligently till my Bar-Mitzwah. When asked by my mother whether I liked this arrangement, I replied that I would prefer staying home; but, if they thought it was better to send me away, why, I could do nothing but submit to their superior judgment.

"Here I recognize a brother of my husband!" exclaimed Bathy. "Stubborn in his ideas concerning any important subject, but nevertheless ever ready to submit to the advice of more experienced persons."

The reason that such a plan was formed was that my brothers had observed that I had some secret pursuits; they suspected that I had been in communication with "some fellows of the new world," and thought it advisable to make an end of such things by sending me to some small place where I would have no opportunity to do anything else but study the Tolmud. This plan was formed some time previously; but they did not know where to send me to. This evening Reb Lippman fixed my destination. They told him their hopes, doubts and fears concerning me, and about the plan they had formed. Reb Lippman had a sister in Lida, her husband was a well-to-do and a very respectable man; he also was personally acquainted with the illustrious Rabbi of that place, and if my family so desired, he would write to his brother-in-law to board me in his house, and to the Rabbi, to become my teacher and guide; his sister too, he was sure, would treat me like her own child. The offer was accepted with thanks and I was bound for Lida.

It would perhaps have been a good plan indeed, had it

been executed a few months sooner. "Stolen water tastes sweet," and my secret pursuits pleased me very much. In the last nine or ten months, I acquired a fair knowledge of the Hebrew grammar, learned to read and write the Russian and German languages tolerably well, and obtained some knowledge of Arithmetics. I was about to commence the study of Geography and History, when I was so unexpectedly to leave Wilna. The next day I stole away from the Beth-Hamedrash to impart the news to my friend Joshua; he transmitted them to Mr. L., whom I went to see a few days later.

The time of my departure arrived; my good parents packed up my little trunk with the necessary requisites; a pair of Tephilin (Philacteries), a prayer book, a Tephilath-Haderech,* and some Talmudical works were among them. My dear sister packed in some sweetmeats, cakes and kopeeken. The letters of recommendation were handed to the driver who engaged to take care of me.

Messrs. L. and K. had been untiring in instructing and advising me whenever I had an opportunity to come to them. They gave me some books, and Joshua was my confidant in keeping them for me. Thus at my departure, a Geography, a History of Russia, Russian and German grammars and readers, a pocket dictionery and a Hebrew grammar of Ben-Zeb, were packed up and taken by Joshua to an inn about a mile distant from Wilna, where the drivers usually stop for a few hours after leaving the city. I was escorted by some of my family, to that place and Joshua had to hide himself with the package under a wagon

* Book of prayers to be recited on a journey.

until the last farewell had been taken. When I was seated in the wagon, and the driver was about to go on, Joshua appeared from his hiding place, and requested him to wait a little, as he had something to transmit to Joseph Tobias. I crawled forward from among the other passengers (a Polish young lady, two elderly Jewesses, a Hebrew preacher two Bachurim, a Russian student, two peasants, a merchant, and a Greek Catholic minister), who were all packed together with their parcels.

"Here, Joseph," my friend said with a knowing glance, "are some books which *our* teacher wants you to take along and study diligently. He ordered me to tell you that your letter was very well written, and that you should write to him frequently; he will correct your letters and send them back to you, in order that you should learn to avoid further mistakes. He will be happy, and the other teacher too, to learn that the continuation of your studies are as profitable as they were till now. You are a lucky boy," he continued, with tears in his eyes, "everybody likes you so well, and it is hard even for me, who knows that you are such an ass, to part with you." We embraced one another heartily; he begged my pardon for his rude words, but I was never offended at them, for I knew that it was his nature to speak like that. After a three days' journey I arrived in Lida.

METAMORPHOSE OF A LITHUANIAN BOY.

PART SECOND.

AS GATHERED FROM RELIABLE SOURCES.

I.

THE INTERESTING STRANGER.

THE Jewish community of Shirvint, a small town in Lithuania, numbering about 400 inhabitants, was quite excited with curiosity. A young man had arrived there, and introducing himself to the Rabbi as a student of the Oral Law, declared his intention to remain in Shirvint for some time in order to pursue his studies under the guidance of that Rabbi. Nobody knew where the young man came from, or what was the nature of his credentials, but everybody was satisfied with regard to his respectability, for the Rabbi treated him with great condescension, and informed the leaders of the community that he is an excellent scholar and comes well recommended. He evidently did not choose to give any further particulars about the young man, and nobody dared to question him about that.

The appearance of the stranger was not like that of the general class of Talmudical scholars. Cleanliness of dress and polished manners stamped him as a curious specimen. He was not shy or retired in his deportment, and when drawn into a conversation, he spoke freely and enjoyed heartily a good joke; but he never spoke of himself, and tried to avoid all allusions to his own personality. All these peculiarities are quite unusual with students of the Talmud.

Immediately after the introduction of the student, the Rabbi issued an order that "everybody who is willing to contribute toward the maintenance of the new student, shall send in his donations or meals to the synagogue instead of inviting the young man to call for them. Nor is anybody permitted to invite him to the house for the usual Sabbath meals, he being the guest of the Rabbi himself for the Sabbath as long as he chooses to remain in Shirvint." There was another peculiar circumstance about him: He engaged a private room in the White Inn, instead of making the synagogue his residence, and the Rabbi himself sent some bedclothes to him. Such tokens of predilection on the part of the Rabbi were enough to establish the popularity of any student; in fact, nothing more could be done even for a retired rabbi; but it was very astonishing that the stern Rabbi of Shirvint should do so much for a young man of about eighteen years of age. The good Shirvintians had sufficient reason to be astonished.

The Sabbath eve arrived. The most prominent members of the community gathered, as usual, in the house of their Rabbi after supper. They found the stranger sitting at the

table engaged in a discussion about some Talmudical topic with their venerable spiritual guide. They listened to the controversy with great respect, and noticed that the young man was actually a profound scholar. He argued with great knowledge of the Talmudical literature, and sometimes even defeated the arguments of the Rabbi with great success. The latter seemed to derive much pleasure from the sharp arguments of his opponent, notwithstanding his occasional defeat.

On the Sabbath morning, the young man was called up to the reading of the Law in the synagogue. The congregation was astonished to hear that the title of a Rabbi was conferred upon that young man, and learned that his name was Joseph-ben-Tobias. The young man pronounced the blessings and read the portion of Scripture with a sonorous voice and good effect. The Ladies, who were peeping through the small windows of their department into the synagogue, were charmed with the title and voice of the stranger. In Shirvint, as well as anywhere else, the ladies are easily impressed with talent and merit.

The contributions toward the maintenance of Rabbi Joseph were henceforth very satisfactory. Small vessels of soup and meat were regularly carried into the synagogue by the daughters of the most distinguished members of the community; sometimes even by their worthy helpmates themselves. The polished manners of the young scholar won their susceptible hearts. Subsequently they had more reason to like him, for he had a peculiar way in winning the love of their children. He played with the little ones in his hours of recreation, taught them to write in sand, to

reckon, to recite Hebrew passages, and distributed toys among them if they appeared on the playground orderly dressed and combed. Thus the young man succeeded in a very short time to gain the respect of the gentlemen, the love of the ladies, the attachment of the children: in short, he became the favorite of the whole community.

II.

HANNAH.

Among those who brought meals to the synagogue for Rabbi Joseph was Hannah, the daughter of the Parness (president of the community). She was a young girl, fifteen years of age, with a white skin, black hair, eyes of a deep blue, a well-rounded figure, and a very symmetrical face. Her teint was very healthy looking, and her motions as quick and lively as her innocent heart was light. She came to the vestry room regularly three times every Tuesday, and remitted her message for Joseph to the janitor. On one occasion she addressed the Janitor:

"Please give that to Rabbi Joseph right away, for the soup is getting cold. We killed two geese yesterday. They are young pieces, but very fat nevertheless. I will bring you some meat when I come next time this evening, but you must not tell anybody about it, for mamma will scold me. Why do they make such a fuss about that student? Is he really such a nice man?"

"Rabbi Joseph is actually a very fine man and very kind,

too," rejoined the janitor. "I was sick last week, and he brought me a pillow to lie upon, got me some medicine, and treated me as kindly as my own children, or my wife, of blessed memory, would have done, if I were worthy to have them living at my side. God bless him and you, too, Hannah."

"O, he is a kindhearted man," resumed the girl; "that is very nice of him. But he is not pretty, is he? He is so pale, and looks so thoughtful! He is not as awkward as the other students are, but he is not nice looking by any means. My friend Malcah is of the same opinion."

"Man can see only the outward appearance, but God knows the quality of the heart," rejoined the old man piously. At this instance the young scholar came out of the synagogue, and the janitor resumed: "This is Hannah, Rabbi Joseph, the daughter of our Parness. She brought your dinner."

"I am very thankful to your parents for the meals they send me, and to you for carrying them here," said the student, fixing his eyes on the girl. "The kind young ladies of this place are to me as the birds were to Elijah the prophet. You know how the birds carried meals to that prophet when he was in the wilderness?"

"O yes," answered the girl, blushing and looking down to the ground; "I am not as learned as a gentleman, but I have read all my mother's books. They say you are a great scholar, and a kind man too. I see you are kind, for you speak to such a girl as I am; but you must never tell mamma that I spoke to you. She will scold me for that. She is always very good, only when I give something away

or when I speak to strange gentlemen she scolds me. Malcah's mother scolds her too for such things. You know Malcah? She is my friend, and we tell one another about everything."

"It is better you do not have any secrets from your mother, Hannah," said the young man. "She will never scold you for doing anything that is right; and it is very wrong to do a thing that displeases your mother. Your friend Malcah I do not know."

"O, you speak like all others. I should like to see how you would like it, to be called a foolish girl, and that sort of things."

"My parents used to scold me too, if I did anything wrong. I knew they were right and never complained about it. I tried to avoid any mistake which they pointed out to me."

"Is that the reason why you have become so clever?" asked the girl, looking up inquiringly in Joseph's face.

"I do not think I am *so* clever," replied the young man smiling. "Your people here are very kind. They consider me much more than I am worth. I am not better than any of my colleagues."

"You are a very learned man, the Rabbi said so. You can talk much nicer than any of the students, and are very kindhearted. I shall tell mamma that I spoke to you, since you want me to do it. But oh, what a fool I am, speaking to you so long and letting your soup get cold! I wish you a very good appetite." The girl said all that hurriedly and ran away before Joseph could say one word more. The young man looked after her for some time and then returned to the

synagogue. Sometime after dinner he informed the Rabbi that he could not read with him the customary lesson in the Talmud, as he felt much confused in his thoughts. The Rabbi advised him to take a walk in the fresh air, which he accordingly did.

III.

HANNAH AND HER MOTHER.

HANNAH returned home all in a flush.

"Mamma," said she as soon as she came into the room, I saw Rabbi Joseph, and he spoke to me. Oh, how nicely he speaks! And you know, mamma, he does not look to the ground and is not as awkward as all other students of the Talmud. He looks right into one's eyes and speaks as fluently and easily as papa does when he is speaking to you. I was so confused at first, mamma, but I soon became accustomed to his voice and manners. I could speak to him for three days and not feel confused at all."

"What did he say, my child?" asked the good-humored matron.

"Why, mamma, he said such a lot of things that I could not repeat all he said. He spoke something about the ravens that carried food to Elijah the prophet. He said we were very kind people and he is very thankful to us. He told me to obey you in everything. I asked him whether he knew Malcah, and he says he does not know her. His parents used to scold him very often and they were always right, he said. And, oh! he is so good, mamma,

the janitor told me how he cured him and gave him a pillow and tended to him when he was sick."

"Well," said the mother, "I suppose you made them dull with your raillery and told them all kind of nonsense."

"No, mamma, I only said that he is renowned as a great scholar, and he smiled and said that he was no better than any of his colleagues. Why did he say so, mamma? All other students like to boast so much. He does not know Malcah, either."

"Why, you little goose, how should he know Malcah? do you think that such a man cares to know every foolish girl?"

The conversation was broken up by the entrance of a neighbor who had business with the mother. When the stranger left the room, Hannah resumed again: "Mamma, why did his father scold him? Was he also a foolish girl —boy, I mean?"

"Who, my child?" asked the mother, having forgotten all about the previous conversation.

"Rabbi Joseph, I mean," rejoined the girl; "would you also scold him if he were your son? I told him you do sometimes, and he said you mean it well with me. He told me never to have any secret from you. Why did he say so, mamma?"

"Oh, I see, you have bothered the poor student with all kinds of nonsense. Now, he will consider you the most foolish rattle-tat in the world. If you do it again, I will scold you indeed. Must everybody know of your foolishness?"

Hannah crimsoned at this rebuke and did not resume

the subject of her conversation. Some time afterward the mother noticed that she was crying. She anxiously asked Hannah what was the matter.

"I shall never speak to him again," answered the girl in tears, "if he thinks me a fool. I hate him for it, mamma. You know I am not a fool, only when I speak too much. I did not speak much to him."

"O, you are thinking of Rabbi Joseph? Do not worry yourself, my dear; he will not consider you a fool this time. Clever people do not form an opinion by seeing a person once. Don't cry, my child."

Hannah actually did not speak to the student any more. She carried meals for him regularly every Tuesday, handed them to the janitor, and did not make a single remark concerning the young scholar.

But it happened somehow that she often met him on his walks. She would then crimson up to the ears, and run away, and meet him the next time and run away again. Sometimes also she would take a walk after supper with her friend Malcah. They would sit on the steps of the White Inn, where they would see Joseph returning home from the synagogue. They would then take a walk around the building, and peep in the window where the young man was sitting at his table with a book. They would make a few remarks to one another, and return home. All by accident, of course. Their remarks, especially those made by Hannah, were of a nature not very complimentary to the student.

IV.

JOSEPH'S COURAGE.

On the post road leading from Wilna, just near the last houses of Shirvint, there are stands of apples and cakes, kept by poor Jewish women for the accommodation of passengers. Joseph used to pass these stands every two or three days, taking his walks in that direction.

Upon one occasion, about five weeks after the incidents narrated in the last chapter, Joseph passing that road, noticed one of the saleswomen crying bitterly, while her stock seemed in the greatest disorder. He approached her and asked what was the cause of her grief. The woman pointed to a group of soldiers sitting in a meadow at some distance, and informed the young man that they had robbed her of her apples and cakes.

"Come with me," said the student; "I will speak to them in your behalf.

"What is the use," answered the poor saleswoman, "they have by this time devoured all my goods, and they will not pay me for them unless with blows."

"By heaven!" exclaimed Joseph, "they shall pay you for your goods, or I will go to their officer. Come along and do not be afraid."

He took the poor woman by the hand, and approaching the soldiers, informed them that they had to pay a bill of one ruble. The soldiers looked with indignation at the bold Jew who dared to address them so imperatively, and said that they would beat him black and blue if he did not go his way, and let them alone.

"Just let any one of you raise his hand," said Joseph in a pure Russian accent, "or refuse to pay this woman for the apples you robbed her of, and you will find yourself in custody this very night. Pay one ruble, or I will go to your officer."

A Russian soldier is rude where there is no effective opposition to his rudeness, but when he sees that he has his match, especially in a person who speaks his language well, he becomes as manageable as a child.

The soldiers thus noticing the undaunted manner of the young man, commenced to apologize; they did it only for a lark, and intended to pay thirty kopeeken for the apples But he insisted upon the price fixed by himself, and gave them to understand the impropriety of their conduct in plain terms. They had no alternative but to pay the required sum. Their spokesman handing the money to the trembling old woman, patted the young man on the shoulder, and called him a *motodetz* (brave fellow) thus acknowledging his superiority and right.

Hannah, who happened to witness the scene—accidentally of course—approached the young man. She evidently wanted to tell him something; but she did not utter a word. As soon as the young man looked at her she blushed and ran away.

The story became well known in the whole place in less than half an hour. The poor woman could not tell enough about the bravery of her benefacter; she had not words enough to illustrate how he talked to the rude soldiers in the pure Russian language, "just like an officer of the army," how she was afraid for his dear person, and trem-

bled in every limb; how the soldiers became scared when he commenced to speak; how he insisted upon getting a ruble, "not one kopeek less," for the apples they robbed her of, and so forth.

At last everybody knew the story, everybody spoke about it; but Hannah, strange to say, could not comprehend the matter well; she asked everybody about all particulars of the occurrence, and never became tired of hearing the same thing over and over again. It seems that all indirect sources were not satisfactory to her; she addressed herself to the woman to whom the occurrence had happened.

"Why, bless your heart." answered the woman, "I would swear that I saw you there all the time."

Hannah crimsoned and replied: "I passed there and saw Rabbi Joseph holding you by the hand, which I thought was very improper; but I did not stop to see what was going on."

The poor woman satisfied her curiosity, and narrated to her all that had passed, with as many exaggerations as her imagination could produce.

The next day was Tuesday, and Hannah carried dinner for the young scholar as usual. Not finding the janitor at his post in the vestry, she was obliged to call for Joseph. The student came out, (girls are not allowed to enter a synagogue unless on some special occasion), and taking the meal from Hannah, he addressed her:

"Are you afraid of me, Hannah? You always run away when you see me, and yesterday you came near me as though you wanted to tell me something; but you ran

away before I could speak one word to you. If I have done anything to displease you, you had better tell me at once, and give me an opportunity to justify myself. I am a stranger here, you know, and it is ungenerous to treat me in such a distant manner."

"I was afraid," said the girl, in her hurried way, "that the soldiers would beat you yesterday—very much afraid indeed. Mamma says that you consider me a foolish girl because I make you dull with my raillery. I see you are always going to the post-station, and sometimes you receive there parcels of books. You are the first Talmud student I ever saw who could speak the Russian tongue so well. I do not think it right that such a scholar as you are should learn unhallowed languages. I saw you hold old Beilah by the hand; I don't think that was right either. Mamma says that I dare not speak to strange gentlemen, for I am engaged to be married to Nahum. He is not as learned as you are, nor is he as kind as you are; we have been engaged two years. I have seen him but twice during that time, and mamma says I must like him as he is. Please don't think me ungenerous, Rabbi Joseph."

She said all this in a hurry and confusion. The young man listened to her with a wry face.

"It seems that you are watching all my movements, Hannah. I would be very sorry if you did so with any malicious intention. Did you tell anybody that you saw me carrying books from the post-station?"

"No," said the girl, looking right up into his face. "I did not even tell my friend Malcah about it. I am afraid to speak about you. I was *so* angry when mamma told me

that you consider me a foolish girl. Do you actually think so of me ?"

"No, Hannah," replied the young man, with a trembling voice, "your mother was mistaken this time; I wish there were no greater or worse fools in the world. I have the best opinion of you."

"Oh, and I am thinking the world of you, too. I am only afraid to say so to any body else. I am so glad that mamma was mistaken concerning your opinion about me. I am not ungenerous either. Good bye, now. Don't say to anybody what I told you. Mamma will be waiting for me. Good bye." And off she went.

V.

THE DENUNCIATION.

At the unusual hour of ten o'clock in the night, about three weeks after the narrated occurences had transpired, the Shirvintian Synagogue was the theatre of a very lively scene. The Rabbi was in his seat near the ark wherein the scrolls of the Law were kept, and six or seven of the most prominent members of the community were sitting around him. There were no candles burning in the brass chandeliers suspended on the ceiling, but only on the book-stands before the assembly a few burning tallow candles were melted, the smothering, flickering, smoky light of which indicated that there was some affair of importance and privacy going on. Two students of the Talmud, evi-

dently in a very nervous state of mind, were standing before the assembly. The Rabbi opened proceedings with the following remarks, and addressed to the gentlemen sitting near him :

"I have invited you here in order that you shall hear what these two men (pointing at the students,) have to report about Rabbi Joseph. For reasons which I will tell you another time, I will not and cannot act in the matter alone, I must have the approval and coöperation of the 'seven best men of the community.'"

He then ordered the students to tell their story. The following statements were made by one student in a very nervous manner and incoherent terms, and they were confirmed by the other, who was almost in a spasmodic state of mind.

The speaker once overheard a conversation between Joseph and Hannah. The "righteous" daughter of Parness (that gentleman was one of the jury,) reproached the student for his doubtful conduct. She saw him carrying books of unhallowed contents from the post-station, and also holding a strange woman by the hand. Joseph begged her not to betray him, and she consented to keep the secret on condition that he promised not to do it any more. He who overheard this interview confided the secret to his colleague, the second witness, and they resolved to watch Rabbi Joseph's movements. They observed that he had the habit of going out in the field almost every afternoon. He always had some books or papers with him on such expeditions, and he laid down in a bush reading those books, looking in some curious designs and making notes with a pencil in

a small book which he carried in his pockets and sometimes on loose paper.

Once he lost one of his papers, which they picked up and presented to the jury. Once during the period of their observations they saw him entering the post station, shaking hands with an officer there, who handed him a small parcel with red seals. He opened the parcel in a bush, and finding there two books, he put them in his pockets and went home.

The witnesses were rigidly examined and cross-examined by the jurors, and were dismissed. The piece of paper which had been produced was unfolded by the Rabbi with a very grave air; but he lost all presence of mind when his eyes fell on the contents of the fatal document. He suddenly jumped up from his seat and overthrew two book-stands that stood near him with a crash. "Alas!" exclaimed he, "that my eyes should behold such iniquity!" The jurors looked at each other with frightened countenances. "See," continued the Rabbi, his eyes riveted on the scrap of paper, "and, behold, these mysterious signs and figures! These are letters, I suppose, of unhallowed languages, intermixed with signs of every description. Alas! there are true crosses among them, all in regular series by each figure. It is the language of the evil one!" His exclamations continued to that effect, and he handed the paper to one of the gentlemen.

One of the jurors suggested that there may be no cause of alarm after all. The paper may have been found by Rabbi Joseph and dropped by him on purpose. It was not his writing perhaps. This suggestion calmed the learned

man a little. He sat down saying, "I would to God that the case were so." But one of the jurors discovered on one end of the paper just by a series of signs and figures a verse written in pure Hebrew, to the following effect:

How magnificent and awful the ladder
That leads from earth unto heaven:
Ev'ry phenomenon of nature
Forms a step of this ladder:
Nature, the revelations of Jehovah,
Testifies to His omnipotence.
How magnificent and awful the ladder
That our forefather saw in his dream.

The writing was Joseph's, the Rabbi knew it. The contents were, as everybody could see, of a very profane nature, explaining the holy and mysterious vision of Jacob as a contemplation on nature, and the last as the revelation of the Holy Name! These showed that the piece of paper did originally belong to Joseph and all the signs were written by him. The Rabbi bewailed the young scholar as a soul that was caught in the snares of the Evil-one. As a fallen star. Some suggestions of a milder nature were made. It was resolved at last that the student should be called upon to justify himself if he could. All present should assemble in the house of the Parness next evening, to hear the explanations of the offender. Till then nothing should transpire, the whole scheme should be kept in strict privacy. The Rabbi should come to the house of the Parness, and together with that gentleman examine Hannah about what she saw of the offender. Joseph should then be notified to bring his books to the house of the Parness and to

be prepared to give an account of his proceedings. The meeting adjourned after reading some psalms and reciting some prayer from an especial prayer book.

VI.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

On the next day Joseph found between the slices of bread which were sent to him for dinner a note to the following effect:

"There is something going on about you which makes me so afraid concerning your security. Come this afternoon to the bush on the right side of the large stone behind the post-office. I shall come there and tell you all I know. O, I am so anxious! Do not fail to come.

Hannah."

This note confused and frightened the young scholar. What in the world could have happened that this unartful child should be so "anxious concerning his security?" There must be something very serious that induced the girl to take such a step as this, appointing him a rendezvous in the bush. That day was a Wednesday; his dinner came not from the Parness, how then could Hannah slip in the note between the slices of bread? Then it occurred to him that the whole affair may be not so serious at all. Hannah's fancy constructed a straw into an avalanche threatening to fall on him, for she is a mere child. At any rate it betrays a deep feeling in the girl for him. He loved her since he

saw her the first time ; now, there is no doubt that she loves him too. Should he trust himself to such a secret interview with her, knowing that she is betrothed to another? Would he be able to control his feelings in her presence while he is with her alone. But then was it not his duty to reassure the poor girl who is so anxious about him? In this strain his thoughts were wandering the whole time till unconsciously he found himself walking in the direction of the appointed place.

Having arrived at the indicated bush, and not seeing anybody there he stretched himself under a tree, and taking out a small Bible which he always carried in his pocket, he opened it at random, and commenced reading. The first passage which occured to him was Cant. viii, 6 : "Place me as a seal upon thy heart, place me as a seal upon thy arm. Truly love is as violent as death (jealousy is as cruel as the grave) ; her sparks are the sparks of fire, of a godlike flame." It is a noble passage. No translation can do it justice. A thousand of the ablest and most exciting love-stories can not express as much as these few words. But my hero read it in the original, and understood it well ; perhaps better than most men do, for his mind was just suited for such a subject.

He did not read in the Bible any further. He was analyzing in his mind the ideas of the one passage he read while his eyes wandered on the road where he expected Hannah to come. A touch on the shoulder awakened him from his revery. He turned round, and saw Hannah standing with a branch in her hand. He jumped up as quick as lightning and stared at the girl with sparkling eyes.

"Please do not look at me like that, Rabbi Joseph," said the girl, in her innocent way, "I am so afraid when you look at me so, though I know that you are a good man. I could not say half of what I have to tell you, if you continue looking like that. I feel so confused."

"Do not be confused, Hannah," rejoined the student, feeling ashamed of his weakness, "I will not look at you if you do not like it. I was astonished to see you on this side, for I expected you to come on the road from the other side. What were you going to tell me?"

"I came by the path behind the post station in order that nobody should notice me. I am standing here these ten minutes. I thought you were asleep and was afraid to wake you. I made a noise with the branches, and then I broke this branch, but you did not hear it. I then touched your shoulder with the branch, for I have something very important to tell you. Excuse me for interrupting your sleep, and, please, do not think me ungenerous."

"No, Hannah, I do not think you ungenerous. On the contrary, I think you are the best girl living. But never mind what I think," he added, with an effort to control his feelings, "what important thing had you to tell me?"

"The Rabbi was at our house this morning, and spoke to me about all sorts of things. He asked me whether I saw you holding a woman by the hand, and I told him how I saw you taking old Beilah by the hand and leading her to the soldiers on that Monday you know. He smiled and said that was nothing, his doubts on that point were dissipated. I wonder what were his doubts concerning you? Then he asked me how you spoke the Russian language,

and what kind of books I saw you carrying from the post station. I wonder how he knows about the books. I did not tell anybody about it; not even to my friend Malcah, upon my word. Well, I said that you spoke the Russian language very pure. I could not say a falsehood to the Rabbi, you know. About the books I did not know how the letters looked, for I never saw them open. He told me then not to speak to anybody about it, and made such a grave face! I thought I must warn you, for I felt very anxious about you, though I think that they cannot do you any harm. I went to Pessah, who is always sending you meals on Wednesday, and said I would cut the bread for your dinner. I always go to those who send you meals, and cut your bread or prepare your soup. It affords me a kind of pleasure to prepare what you are going to eat. I then slipped my note between the slices of bread. I am glad you found it and came here. If I were you, I would go home and burn all the books, unless they were of holy contents. But you must know better what to do. I am such a foolish girl sometimes, and you are such a clever man! I did not tell anybody about the Rabbi's visit to our house. Nor did I say that I was going here. Please, don't you tell anybody either; mamma would scold me very much. She would say perhaps it was foolish or naughty for me to come here, but I could not help it. I thought it would be for your benefit. Good by."

She said all that almost in one breath as if anxious to rid her conscience of a heavy load, and as soon as she finished she ran off like a deer.

The young man stood there for a few minutes as though

riveted to the ground. He looked at the light disappearing figure, while the sound of her innocent prattle lingered in his ear. He did not think of the "important" things which she reported. His thoughts were fixed on the few unimportant sentences she had uttered. They contained a formidable declaration of love in the most innocent manner. The girl herself evidently did not understand what they were.

Joseph was spell-bound and could not utter a word while she spoke. The whole interview seemed to him like a dream. At last he directed his steps mechanically toward the synagogue, and arrived there just in time for the afternoon service. His mind was wandering during the whole evening on the subject of Hannah's love.

VII.

JOSEPH'S ROOM.

After the evening prayer the Rabbi called Joseph and informed him that he would go to see his room. The student did not quite understand the importance or the strangeness of such a desire; his mind was employed with something else. He silently complied with the request of his superior, and dreamingly accompanied the Rabbi on the way toward the White Inn. He did not even notice that the other two students and the janitor followed them. The Rabbi made a few indifferent remarks on the road, to which Joseph answered in an abstracted manner.

When they arrived at the room, and the Rabbi ordered the three persons who followed them to come in, Joseph's reveries were dispelled. He understood all at once what this visit meant. All that he had heard from Hannah about the investigation the Rabbi had made that morning suddenly occurred to his mind, and he understood that his position was a critical one.

He was almost overwhelmed by this new thought. There was public disgrace, perhaps anathema, threatening him; he was warned in time and did not take any notice of the warning. On the verge of the abyss he was hunting a shadow all the time. At the present moment he formed a resolution.

"My time has come, as if ordained in Providence. I must take a decided course now. Happen what may I will maintain my object and make an end to all hypocrisy."

Thus the young man mused to himself while the Rabbi sitting in his chair examined the room, and the other three persons stood reverently at the door.

"You are pleasantly located here," the Rabbi commenced. "No talmudical student has it so good as you. The Shervint community is treating you in the most generous way."

Joseph understood that the last words were intended for a hint that he lived on the charity of the community, he therefore replied:

"You know well that I did not want to have anything from your community. The charity was forced upon me by yourself. I wanted to pay my board, but you insisted on my being maintained by the congregation. My rent I

pay and have a right to keep a room according to my own taste."

"You seem willing to be independent. I did not understand it before," rejoined the old man. "Why did you not tell me so in plain terms? But that is not to the purpose. I wanted to see your quarters and ask you what you are doing with yourself all the time you are away from the synagogue? Have you any books to study here? I see you have some writing materials on the table."

By this time Joseph had recovered all his self-posession. He decided to act resolutely and openly.

"Yes, Rabbi, I have here plenty of books and writing materials. My books are of a kind that I cannot obtain in the synagogue, and I am studying them while I am in my private quarters. Would you like to see some of them. You will be quite astonished, Rabbi."

There were no books needed to astonish the pious gentleman; the last words of the young scholar were sufficient for that purpose. Joseph's deportment in meekly following him to that room, and the answers to what the Rabbi said till now betokened a quiet submission. The Rabbi expected to find an humble penitent in the young man and was rejoicing to think of the great success he had in saving the young man's soul from the clutches of the Evil one. Now the last remarks of the student had quite a different issue. The Rabbi did not know what to make of them. Was it bold defiance or unsuspecting innocence, in the young man? He reflected for a while; then he said:

"Yes, Rabbi Joseph, I should like to see these curious books."

The young man drew a box from under his bed, unlocked it very coolly and took out of it a large book. He deposited it on the table and opened it. If an electric shock had gone through the old man's frame he could not have been startled more than at the sight of the opened book. It contained nothing but shapely designs in all kinds of colors. He exclamined, "Sh'ma Israel!" and turned off his eyes. Joseph proceeded unconcernedly to take out one book after another and to open them before the Rabbi. Nearly all his books were in unhallowed languages; some of them were full of little signs and crosses, others of circles and angles, and others still were full of sketches of buttles and other instruments, or animals, leaves, birds, &c., of various shapes. It was a fearful sight to see all those sacrilegious things. The Rabbi could not bear it any longer.

"Do you want to conjure up the Evil One here?"

"No, Rabbi, I could not do it, even if I would!" was the cool reply.

The old man did not waste any more words. He ordered Joseph to follow him to the Parness, and the two students with the janitor he ordered to take all the books to the same house.

VIII.

THE TRIAL.

The house of the Parness was prepared to receive our party. The same gentlemen who acted as jurors at the denouncing were seated round a large table of a primitive

fashion and the chair was vacant awaiting the Rabbi to occupy it. Hannah with her mother was sitting in a remote corner of the room reverently, perhaps anxiously, listening to the conversation of the gentlemen. The subject of that conversation was Joseph. Some were of the opinion that in case the student proves guilty of studying unhallowed language no quarter should be given to him. He should be treated with the utmost rigor of the Jewish law and custom, because he being such a profound scholar, knew well how unlawful it is to do such things. Others thought that if he repents his action and allows his books to be burned, and gives up his private quarters and goes to reside in the Synagoge as all other students do, a hard penitence should be laid upon him, as receiving Malkoth (39 strokes) in public, or several days in fasting; but then all shall be forgiven him for the sake of his learning. Hannah's face changed according to the opinions she heard. She cried bitterly.

The party arrived in the house. All arose from their seats when the Rabbi stepped into the room. Joseph came in after him and then came their followers who carried the fatal books. The old gentleman dropped in his seat almost trembling with agitation. Joseph made a bow to all present, very calmly looked around for a bench and sat down as soon as he found one without the slightest agitation. The other persons remained standing at the door dropping their parcels on the floor. Hannah left off crying as soon as she noticed the calm bearing of the student. As soon as the meeting came to order the Rabbi commenced to speak.

"It is written in our holy Law: You shall be guiltless before the Lord and before Israel. I have to make a few statements concerning Rabbi Joseph (I am really sorry to mention his name with the honors of a teacher in Israel, but I have to do it, for as yet he is Rabbi,) in order to appear guiltless before you. When this young scholar arrived here I treated him with the greatest partiality, and imposed upon you to do the same. Till now you have obeyed me, but now I must tell you my reasons for acting as I did in order that you should not consider me guilty of leading you astray.

"This young scholar is an ordained Rabbi for more than a year. He obtained this title from five of the greatest Rabbis of this country, and this title was confirmed by many other prominent Rabbis, in the number of which are two of his own brothers of great renown. He is practically of the same authority as myself; that is the reason why I could not undertake to act against him on my own responsibility and invited you to participate in the matter. He is the son of a very influential and pious family, and was brought up in the best manner; these were my reasons for allowing him to live more comfortably than any other student—he is not used to the hardships of poverty. His parents sent him away from home because they did not know what to make of him. He did not want to marry notwithstanding the most alluring offers that were made to him. Nor did he want to accept any position in a congregation as his elder brothers did as soon as they were ordained. His parents thought that he would change his mind when he had once been away from home and learned more of the world.

"They sent him here and wrote to me that they wanted to pay his board, but I thought that it would be an honor for our community to do something for a young man of his merits. He urgently requested me not to make known anything of his merits or of his great family connections, in order that he should not be treated with too much predilection. He even wanted me to forget his title, and consider him like any unordained student. I did not concede to the last, though I consented to the first. Now, alas! I have discovered the reason of his conduct. It is not humbleness of spirit that prompted him to be so quiet and so good. It is because he did not want to be looked after too much in order that he should have his own way. This is, perhaps, the reason why he did not want to marry or accept a public position. He gave himself up to the influence of the Evil-one. You have heard, gentlemen, the accusations which were brought against him. It is all true. Alas! my own eyes have seen the unhallowed books and mystic images in which he is meditating. I ordered them to be brought here that you might see them also. I intend to write to all the rabbis to whom he is known in order that his title may be withdrawn. I will write also to his parents, though I am very sorry to announce such afflicting news. Till this is done and till my letters will be answered, you must decide what we shall do to him and how we shall treat him here. A rabbi he is until that time, and his family has to be respected, but even the office of high priest is not to be considered in a case so clearly against our religious principles.

IX.

THE TRIAL.—CONTINUED.

THE Rabbi finished his speech, and there was a low murmur among the jurors when Joseph arose calmly and begged to say a few words.

"I am sorry," said he, "that your Rabbi here takes so to heart a thing which is not quite as alarming as you imagine. I have nothing to do with the Evil-one, I believe and serve the God of our forefathers. The books which you see are nothing but scientific manuals. There are geographies, mathematical books, natural sciences, history, etc. All the prominent Rabbis of olden times studied the same science in the languages of their time. I study them in the languages of modern times and do not intend to give up these studies. Since the Rabbi here chooses to make such an alarm about my doing so, I must tell you that neither you nor anybody can interfere with me. I intend to return home next week. I have written to my parents about it. Now I suppose that I will have to go somewhere else, for I will not be able to witness the grief of my parents, nor can I give up the object I have in view."

"Do you mean to tell me that these abominable figures are the sciences which our Rabbis of olden times wasted their time upon?" said the Rabbi opening an atlas, and pointing at the maps.

"Yes," said the young man, and explained what the maps were.

"But this paper, with actual crosses on it, written in

your own hand," continued the old man, "is that science also?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "It contains some mathematical problems which I was trying to solve. The crosses are no more than marks of addition. The problems are fortunately of such a nature that you will understand them if I explain it to you in Hebrew. I am only a beginner in this line." Here he took a piece of paper and explained to the Rabbi one of the problems, substituting Hebrew instead of the Latin characters. In this way he explained to them the meaning of all his books, and all present were astonished at the vast knowledge of the young scholar. The Rabbi relented and said:

"Well, Rabbi Joseph, if you learn these things for the glory of God, and for the purpose of 'knowing how to answer to a renegade' when you once occupy the position of a teacher in Israel, I have nothing against it, though I would rather see you employ your brilliant talents exclusively in the study of God's word."

"I will not deceive you," rejoined the student; "but my object is to become a useful member of society, which I can not be if I devote all my time to the study of rabbinical knowledge. Since seven years I have occupied myself with the study of practical sciences, and my object is to go through a course of study—probably technology—at the University of St. Petersburg. Till now I have worked along secretly to this end because I did not want to grieve my parents by telling them the object I have in view. I do not intend to be a Rabbi, but I stood the rabbinical examination in order to give my parents pleasure. Now, as

my secret has become known, I will try to avoid as much trouble as I can. Your actions have only hastened the time of my doing so."

All present changed color at this declaration. They tried to pursuade Joseph to give up his perilous object. They begged his pardon for their hasty actions against him.

The Rabbi almost cried with grief "to see such a worthy vessel of the holy law profaned" by such impious designs. But it was of no avail. The young man departed that very night from Shirvint.

Hannah, who witnessed the scene of the trial and the issue of it, complained of a severe headache the moment all the strangers left their house. Her feelings and excitement were too strong not to leave their mark on the poor girl. Having heard the deliberations concerning the young man before he came, she was in a state of great anxiety. She was proud of his calm and gentlemanly manner during the trial. She was sorry when she heard his firm resolutions to take such a course of action, and that he would leave them soon. It occurred to her how far away and unattainable the object of her affection would be. Hannah fell sick with a strong fever the next day, and when she recovered she was no more as rosy and as lively as before.

X.

FIVE YEARS LATER.

On an afternoon in the Spring of 1861, when the Shirvintian synagogue was well filled with those who assembled there for the afternoon and evening services, three army officers unexpectedly entered that place of worship. All eyes turned to look at the strange visitors. Their manners were not as lively and bustling as are generally the manners of Russian army officers. They evinced due respect to the house of God. One of the officers asked for the janitor, and told him to ask the Rabbi whether he would be allowed to read the prayers and say Kaddish, (mourners prayer,) for he was a mourner. The Rabbi was astonished to see Israelites of such dignity. He only asked whether these men ever denied the God of their fathers, and having received an answer that they did not, he accorded the desired permission.

The officer stepped before the Reader's desk and read the prayers fluently and correctly, which indicated that he was in the habit of saying his prayers.

As soon as he commenced to recite the Litany (Sh'monah Esreh) aloud, there occurred a disturbance in the part of the house occupied by the females. Hannah, the daughter of the late Parness, shrieked and fainted away. But this disturbance did not affect the order of the service. The girl was taken home by some of the women, and the thing was quite unknown in the gentlemen's department.

After service the officer stepped up to the Rabbi, and thanking him for the permission he accorded, he asked:

"Do you not know me, Rabbi?"

"I have perhaps seen you somewhere; your voice is quite familiar to me; but I cannot recollect who you are."

"I am Joseph, now Dr. Duboff, who studied under your guidance for several months four years ago."

"Rabbi Joseph!" exclaimed the old man amazed.

"Yes, Rabbi, the very same," answered the young doctor.

By this time there was quite a crowd around them. There were some men who recognized the young man, and greeted him cordially. The young officer introduced his two colleagues, Jewish young men, who, like himself, had accomplished their course of studies and were appointed as physicians in some military hospitals around Vilna. He persuaded them to stop with him for a few days in Shirvint, as he was anxious to see his old friend.

They all repaired to the house of the Rabbi after the evening service, where the young man was asked by the host to tell his story.

"It is a very short story," said he. "When I left this place I went to St. Petersburg with the intention of studying technology; but I soon found out that medicine would be more practicable for me, and I entered a medical college. My parents were angry with my desire to study modern science, and did not want to help me along. I found it very hard to make a living and study at the same time; but I soon became acquainted with an influential officer, and through his influence the government accorded me the rights of a "government student;" that is, it sustained me all the time during my studies, on the condition that I serve as military physician three years on half salary, and

attend two days a week in the military hospital during the time of my study. I had now nothing to care for but my books, and applied myself to them with all energy. Thus I have finished my course now, and through the influence of the same friend I obtained a very lucrative position in a military hospital in Vilna. That is the reason why you see me in such a uniform, for I serve the government, and have the title and rights of a captain of the army. My parents, in the meantime, having heard that I did not depart from the ways and customs of my people, and that I had the good fortune of doing good to some Jewish soldiers who were under my influence, had become reconciled to me. But to my great grief, I lost my good mother six months ago. I intend to remain here a day or two, and then go to my place of destination."

The young man asked about his friends, and especially about the Parness and his family, and was informed that the old Parness died in reduced circumstances, in consequence of which Hannah's engagement was broken off, and she is unmarried yet, living with her mother in great poverty.

He was sorry that the girl lost her father, but not for the rest.

I do not undertake to depict the scenes that transpired between the young military dignitary and Hannah. There were tears of grief and rejoicing—declarations of love to his person, and dissatisfaction with his attire, which was so very un-Jewish.

After a great deal of persuasion, in which the Rabbi, let it be said to his justice, took an active part, Hannah's mother gave her consent to the marraige of her daughter with Rabbi Joseph. The ceremony was performed by the Rabbi himself, who, dictating the certificate of marriage, did not omit the title of Rabbi before the name of Dr. Duboff, which was an unmistakable evidence that he regarded the young man worthy of the dignity.

END.

RABBI ELCHANAN,

A LEGEND OF MAYENCE.

I.

RABBI SIMEON, THE GREAT.

ON one summer afternoon, Rabbi Simeon, the chief Rabbi of Mayence, was sitting in his study in deep meditation. There were several large volumes of Talmudical lore lying scattered on his table, just as they were left by his disciples who studied under his guidance a few hours previously. But the Rabbi did not mind these books at that moment. He was under the influence of a holy inspiration. His head reclined on one hand, the other hand rested on a parchment which was spread before him, while his lips whispered slowly some words. Suddenly a bright glance flashed in his eyes; he took a pen and wrote down two or three verses on the parchment. It was a sentiment of his heart which the Rabbi expressed in a manner as skillful as his bright and lofty mind could invent. Thus the fin-

ishing touch was given to the grand opening-hymn for the prayers of New-Year's day, which our people still repeat every year with devout hearts. In that hymn the Eternal is magnified as King and Ruler of the universe, before whose sight nothing is concealed, and the glory of whom is to be proclaimed with the voice of the *Shophar*. The style of that hymn flows easily and magnificently, as the worthy garb of the sentiments it expresses. The sentences are beautifully joined with one another, and the rhymes are of the most melodious nature. Acrostics of the Alphabet and of the auther's name are artistically woven in at the beginning of each verse, without impeding the easy flow of style or obscuring the lofty ideas which the hymn contains.

Rabbi Simeon was now reviewing the whole poem with just satisfaction, when the door opened and a child of remarkable beauty stole in unperceived. It was the youngest son of the Rabbi, a boy four years old. He crept behind his father's chair and looked into the manuscript which the latter had before him.

"Father, dear farther," the child suddenly exclaimed, "you wrote down my name on that parchment; did you not? There right in the begining: '*El chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpar*,'" he read with remarkable fluency.

The Rabbi took the boy on his knees, and kissing his glowing cheeks said: "Yes, my Elchanan, I have put thy name also in that poem. When our brethren will stand in holy worship before the Lord on the New-Year's day, and utter their sentiments in the words of this hymn, thy name shall be remembered with mine. But dost thou

understand the meaning of the sentence which thou hast read over so beautifully ?"

"I know the meaning of the first few words: 'God graced his inheritance with sweetness,' but I do not know what the word '*lehashpar*' means."

"It means 'to embellish,' my child. The sentence expresses the idea that God has graced the people of Israel with his holy injunctions and thereby embellished them with sweetness of disposition and virtue. Israel has been the chosen people to which the knowledge of the Eternal was vouchsafed first, and is therefore called the inheritance of God. By observing the injunctions of the holy law we become graceful and agreeable in the sight of God and men. Remember this, my child, whenever you hear your name mentioned."

The boy took the parchment and read over several times the opening sentence, while the pious Rabbi regarded him with joy and pride. He then returned the manuscript saying:

"Now, father, I know this sentence by heart. I know the meaning of it too, as you have explained it to me, and I will never forget it: '*El chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpar.*'"

The happy parent embraced his hopeful offspring with emotion.

II.

ELCHANAN'S ILLNESS.

A FEW weeks after these occurences, deep grief prevailed in the house of Rabbi Simeon. Elchanan became very ill; the life of that bright and hopeful child was in great danger. The Rabbi and his wife were sitting at the sick-bed sorrowfully watching their beloved child, and Margaret, his nurse, was busying herself with preparing and handing the cooling beverage which Rabbi Nathan the physician prescribed for the invalid. It was a heartrending sight to view the little sufferer laboring under the strong fever that befel him. He restlessly moved about in his bed with burning face and forehead. He called in delirious fancy for his parents, talked to his brothers and playmates, and repeated whatever sentence or prayer he had learned by heart. He would call in the most plaintive terms for his nurse; but when she approached him he would push her away violently screaming. He would then fall back exhausted crying: "*El cahuan nachlatho benoam lehashpir.*" Rabbi Nathan, the physician once entered the room just when the child made such an exclamation. He was astonished to hear such expressive words from the lips of the delirious child, and looked inquiringly at Rabbi Simeon.

"It is a verse of a poem which I have composed for the New-Year's day," answered the father to the inquiring glance of the physician. "The boy came into my study and found the manuscript on the table He rejoiced to see his

name at the beginning of that poem. I explained him the meaning of the sentence and he learned it by heart."

"I told you oftentimes, Rabbi" rejoined the physician, "that you exert too much the brains of that child. Children of his age should have no mental exertion whatever, until their physical strength is sufficiently developed. Your boy is very ill," he continued, shaking his head as he examined the invalid, "and he must be watched with the greatest care. He has a strong fever the crisis of which is not to be expected before the ninth day from this date. The sickness will be on the increase all the time. But I would not advise you all three to watch him together. Your own health may be affected by overwork."

"The Rabbi need not watch here at all," said the worthy housewife. "His health is altogether taxed too much without that by constant studying, writing and teaching. I and Margaret can change off with one another at the sick-bed, and the Rabbi should retire to rest himself."

The advice of the physician was followed. Rabbi Simeon retired to his apartment agreeable to the desire of his wife, and the latter changed off with Margaret at the bed-side of the sick child. One evening, when the mother was persuaded by the urgent request of the faithful nurse to retire for a few hours' rest, the girl was left alone by the invalid. Elchanan fell into a restless sleep and his nurse watching him sunk in a revery. Her thoughts ran to the following effect:

"Poor, dear child! You are so young, and unmerciful death is already claiming your dear life. There is not even the hope of heavenly bliss for your soul, for you are

of the accursed Jewish race that crucified God! You are so beautiful and so bright, and I love you so affectionately! Oh, if I could only save you, my dear, dear nursling, what would I not give for such a happiness!"

The poor girl commenced sobbing so loud that the sick child awoke and commenced to rage in a fearful delirium. In vain did the girl endeavor by various means to calm him. The more she tried to sooth him and call him endearing names, the more violent did he become; until Rabbi Simeon heard the noise in his study and came into the sick-room. No sooner had the unfortunate father entered the room, than the boy exclaimed: "*El chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpar*," and became quite calm. Rabbi Simeon bowed over the bed in fervent prayer, his tears were falling on his prostrate child. He stayed at the bedside till his wife came and took his place. Elchanan enjoyed a refreshing sleep all the rest of the night. On the following morning the physician found him much better than on the day before, and encouraged the sorrow-stricken parents to hope for a good termination of the sickness.

III.

THE RABBI'S DREAM.

It was a Sunday morning. A pious multitude poured forth from the "Liebfrauen" church. Only a few devout souls remained inside the sacred walls to allay their sorrows by confession. Margaret was among the latter.

Her confessor was Father Thomas, before whom she confessed her sinful attachment to her nursling, and how she felt sorry for his poor little soul which was destined for hell, since the child was of Jewish extraction. It must have been a wonderful balm which the pious Father offered to the heart of the devout girl, for when she left the confessional there was none of her careworn looks about her: she was bright and cheerful.

Elchanan was still suspended between life and death. The ninth day of his sickness came and that night found his mother anxiously watching at his bedside. Rabbi Simeon sat in his study endeavoring to pursue the research on a certain subject which occupied his mind; but his exhausted frame claimed its natural rights, the Rabbi fell asleep, reclining on his book. A genial smile played on his features while he was sunk in evidently pleasant dreams. When he awoke he closed his book and went into the sick-room with a cheerful smile on his countenance.

"Bella," said he, addressing his wife, "our child will not die!"

She looked at him with surprise; but he sat down by her side and continued:

"Listen, my dear, what a wonderful dream I had. I am certain that it had a bearing upon the future of our child, and although I cannot make out the meaning of the whole dream, I feel as though its main purport is that our child will not die. Fatigued, I fell asleep with a volume of the talmud open before me. The words and the letters became all mixed up and were dancing before my wearied eyes, then the latter assumed the forms which their names signify.

The *Aleph* appeared like a prince with a sceptre in his hand governing a multitude of other princes who humbly approached him and kissed his feet. The *Beth* was transformed into a magnificent house, a palace the like of which I never saw in my life. Then appeared the *Yod* as a threatening arm with the *Zain* as a dreadful weapon clenched in its fist. I found myself sitting on a camel into which the *Gimel* was transformed, and making a journey with a sorrowful heart. I arrived at a wonderful place and the *Daleth* was transformed into a portal of the palace which Beth represented. The whole multitude then swayed to and fro in wild confusion before me, and suddenly I noticed that the prince which Aleph represented was our son Elchanan, sitting on a golden throne, with a threefold crown on his head and princes and rulers kissing his foot with great humility. The *Peh* was then transformed into a mouth that smiled at me very pleasantly; but I became frightened as I noticed a great golden cross upon the breast of my son. I commenced to cry bitterly and called him: 'Elchanan, Elchanan.' When he heard my voice he descended from his throne, flung away the large cross and clung to my breast, sobbing loudly and calling me his dear father. We were then surrounded by all the letters and carried back to Mayence. Here we found a throne with seventy steps, and a great multitude looking at it with fright; for on each step there were placed roaring lions and eagles, that fluttered violently with their wings, just as King Solomon's throne is described by our sages. Elchanan then cheered the horrified multitude and ascended that throne courageously, while the roaring lions licked his feet

and the eagles prostrated themselves before him. No sooner had he ascended the throne, when I saw a magnificent crown, woven from the rays of the sun, on his head, and angels flying around him, a bright halo encircling him and all of us, and a loud voice called: 'Thus is honored the man who honored the King of Kings.' I was overwhelmed with joy and delight; my eyes could not stand the glaring light that surrounded our son, and the voice continued calling till I awoke. There is not a dream without nonsense; but I tell you, my dear, that this dream had a great significance. Whatever all the apparitions may signify, of one thing I feel certain, that our child will live, and that he is destined for great glory."

"The will of God be done!" said the pious mother, and bent over her child, who was breathing gently and who had sunk into quiet slumber.

Rabbi Nathan, the physician, was sitting at the bedside on the next morning, watching the child who was still asleep. When he awoke calmly and asked for his father, the physician said: "Blessed be He, who cures the sick. The crisis is happily over, your child is saved by the help of God, Rabbi."

IV.

THE ABDUCTION.

Many days still was Elchanan confined to bed, and Margaret tended him with the greatest care. Whoever regarded her could observe that her conduct toward the

child had assumed a strange character. If she formerly loved the boy and treated him with affectionate care, she now ministered to him with a sort of religious devotion. She could not suffer his relatives or even his parents to approach him, and was jealous of every little service they would render. Her strange demeanor did not escape the notice of her mistress; but it was ascribed by her to a morbid condition of Margaret's mind, which might have been the result of too much exertion on the part of the faithful nurse. The true cause however of Margaret's behavior was to be sought elsewhere.

On that Sunday when she disclosed to her confessor her sorrow that her darling would die and go to hell, because it was a Jewish boy, the pious Father advised her to preserve the poor little soul from the grasp of Satan by performing on it the Sacrament of Baptism. Margaret followed the advice, and believed that she thus saved her nursling from death and damnation. From the moment that the ceremony was performed on the unconscious child, she regarded it as her own, and all her thoughts were engaged in a scheme to snatch it away from the Jewish parents and have it educated in the Roman Catholic religion. Father Thomas, of course, planned his best for the salvation of the convert; Margaret had only to follow his instructions.

The New-Year's festival arrived, and all the inmates of the Rabbi's house had gone to the Synogogue to listen to the blowing of the *Shophar*. Only Elchanan had to remain at home with Margaret, for the physician did not allow him yet to leave the room. He noticed playing that

his nurse was not as cheerful as she was wont to be, and that she often looked restlessly at the back door; but Margaret told him that it was of no consequence and pressed him to her bosom with great affection. Presently a gentle rapping was heard at the door, the girl went to see who was there with a trembling heart. Some disguised men entered the room; in a moment the frightened boy was grasped, his mouth tied up with a cloth, and he was carried off. All this was performed so quietly and so adroitly that not the slightest noise could be perceived outside of the room.

Margaret closed the door behind the kidnappers, and remained for a while stunned with emotion. But suddenly remorse followed the deed. She commenced to cry for her darling, threw herself on the floor, tore her hair, accused herself of ingratitude, invoked all the punishments of heaven upon her head and raged in a fearful manner. She would be stopped for a minute by the thought that her dear nursling was saved for heaven, but then grief returned with greater violence. When Rabbi Simeon with his family returned from the synagogue, they found the girl lying on the floor, her hair and dress in the greatest disorder and foam issuing from her mouth, while she yelled like a wild beast.

"For heaven's sake!" cried Bella, "Margaret, stand up. Where is Elchanan, my child?"

But she neither arose nor answered. Rabbi Nathan was summoned, who found the girl seriously sick and entirely unconscious. All in the house went in search of Elchanan, but in vain; he could not be found anywhere. The sad news soon spread in the whole community; continued

search was made, the Mayor of the city and the Archbishop were notified of the occurrence, a price was proclaimed for the one who would discover anything about the lost child, messengers were sent in all directions, but all of no avail. The only person who could give any information was lying unconscious, and all that could be ob tained from her was a meaningless, mad smile.

On the second New-Year's day, when the reader commenced to recite the newly composed hymn of Rabbi Simeon: "*El chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpar*," the unhappy father sobbed loudly, for it reminded him too forcibly of his beloved child. There was not an eye in the whole congregation that did not shed tears of sympathy with the honored and revered Rabbi. In the gallery of the ladies, Bella fainted away, and it took considerable time before she was restored and could be taken home. At the close of the service however, Rabbi Simeon so far controlled himself that he could offer consolation to his wife. The extreme piety of the bereft parents enabled them to bear their misfortune with fortitude and resignation. Margaret died a few days after these occurrences, under the care of Father Thomas, who had watched at her bedside since he was notified of her sickness.

V.

FELIX.

ELCHANAN was taken to the convent on the Jacobsberg, and brought into the cell of Father Thomas. Not quite recovered from his recent sickness, the fright and desire for his parents caused the poor boy to be prostrated by a fever much stronger than the former. The exertions of the good monk nearly proved abortive, for the sickness which returned with redoubled vigor threatened to deprive him of his prize. But no efforts were spared to save the life of the boy. At last his strong constitution resisted the fatal attacks of his sickness, he recovered again, regained consciousness, but he lost all recollections of the past. He placed implicit confidence in Father Thomas, who was exceedingly kind and gentle toward him and called him by the name of "Felix."

When Felix became well, Father Thomas brought him to the monastery of St. Jacob at Bamberg, where nobody would think of searching for the lost child and no outside investigation could discover him. Felix soon became the favorite of all the monks of that establishment. They taught him all they could, and were astonished at his eager desire to learn, his wonderful faculty of comprehension, and his remarkable memory. At the age of seven years he could speak and write the Latin language with great facility. But this was all that he could learn at Bamberg, and the Prior, who was very fond of him and desired that

his abilities should be cultivated to the best advantage, took him to Rome. There he also surprised everybody with his wonderful talents; he was introduced to the Pope, who took a great interest in him, and entrusted his further education to the best professors.

At that time the Papacy was at the acme of its power. The successors of Peter were able to make the most powerful monarchs subservient to their will by the thunder of excommunication. Hildebrand, a Benedictine monk, a man of unlimited ambition and possessor of great influence and the most intimate friend of Archbishop Laurentius Amalfi, interested himself especially in the education of the bright and hopeful boy. Thus Felix grew up in the circle of the Papal court, where arts and sciences were cultivated to a great extent. When he had attained the age of nine years, his patron Hildebrand succeeded to the apostolic See under the appellation of Gregory VII. With this event commenced a very exciting period in the history of Papacy. The ideas which Hildebrand conceived while yet a humble monk, he designed to carry out as Pope Gregory VII. His great plan was to establish a theocracy on the principle that the Pope, as representative of God on earth, should be supreme Judge, not only in ecclesiastical but also in all political affairs. For this object he needed a host of devotees in all countries, who should have no other attachment but the church. Such in fact were the numerous clergy whose influence was unbounded; but their attachment to the church was in many instances hindered on account of their family connections by marriage. They were sometimes not to be entrusted in carrying out the

plans of the Pope, for one or more of their relatives, sometimes their sons, were dependent on terrestrial potentates. In order to render the clergy more attached to the church it was necessary that they should remain single. This was the great plan of Gregory VII, and to bring it into execution he issued the bull enjoining celibacy.

A storm of opposition arose against that papal decree. Thousands of the married clergy were indignant, because they were compelled either to sever their family connections or to lose their position. In many instances the resistance was intense, especially in Germany. But Gregory was not the man to relinquish what he once undertook to do and deemed was right. He sent reliable messengers to all the revolting states, to pacify the irritated clergy and to subject them to his will. The ablest of his confidents in this case was Father Felix, who had grown up under his influence and was now a young man of imposing appearance and glowing eloquence.

VI.

THE RISING STAR.

Felix discharged his duties with the best success. He understood how to appease the irritated minds of the clergy, sometimes flattering their vanity by addressing them as co-laborers in the great work in which the Pope was engaged, and sometimes appealing to their religious sentiments with great effect. His fame spread throughout Germany, and

all the superior Bishops of troublesome dioceses were delighted when he came to their succor. His valuable services as papal nuncio were accordingly rewarded by the Pope. While yet on his travels promotions and honors were conferred upon him, and he rose like a shining meteor in the services of his church.

At that time there commenced the struggle between the Pope and the German Emporer, and it was of the greatest importance to the interests of the former that the German Princes should revolt against the authority of their liege lord. The efforts of Felix in this direction wrought wonders. When his object was attained he purposed to return to Rome, but he received the nomination of Bishop of Roverido with advice not to discontinue his journey through Germany. Two years afterward, while at Trier, Felix received the news that he had been appointed Archbishop of Ravenna, and the following year the Pope sent him a cardinal's hat to Brunswick. Thus the young priest of twenty-five years had attained an eminence which but few can reach at their old age. Immediately thereafter he was summoned to the South of Germany. The Bishop of Regensburg was awaiting him with impatience. Henry IV had recovered from his deep humiliation, he gathered his friends around him and defeated his adversary, Emperor Rudolph of Seralia. The Star of Gregory VII began to grow dim, and his adherents made the utmost exertions to reassure success for his cause. A council of the Pope's adherents were assembled at Regensburg and Felix's presence was needed in their midst.

In the neighborhood of that town the carriage of the

young Cardinal suddenly halted, a Jew having thrown himself before the feet of the horses. Felix had the Jew brought before him and kindly asked him what he desired.

"You should save my child, most gracious Sir!" the unfortunate man exclaimed. "My name is Meshullam, and I live in Regensburg. While on a journey to Bamberg the servants of the Knight of Rothenfels attacked me and robbed me of all I had with me, and tore away my beloved daughter from my bosom. In vain have I applied for help wherever I could for six months. Recently I heard that you were coming to our city. Your fame as a kind man and benevolent to the poor and oppressed reached me before. I resolved to apply to you, and knowing that I could not obtain access to your presence in the city I waited for you on the road. Pray, be merciful to an unfortunate father and restore him his dear and only child!"

Felix took the Jew in his carriage and asked him to relate the particulars of the atrocious deed. The Knight was a partisan of the Emperor and lived in open hostility to the Bishops of Regensburg, who had dominion over the Jews of that city. The Bishops had matters of too great importance on hand to afford time for the deliverance of a Jewish girl. Felix promised the grieving father to aid him by all means at his command.

A great assembly of princes, nobles and clergy received the young cardinal at Regensburg with great honor. In their consultation concerning the cause of their church Felix inspired them with fidelity to the church, and gave them much sound advice. While the victorious Emperor was marching to Italy to avenge the humiliation which

he had experienced, the friends of the Pope caused a general revolt throughout Germany. The vassals of the Emperor were beaten everywhere, also the castle of Rothenfels was taken, and Felix took care that the captured Jewish girl should be rescued and he himself brought her back to her happy parents.

From Regensburg, Felix proceeded to Bamberg. The aged prior of St. Jacob's monastery felt very much flattered when the cardinal introduced himself as a former inmate and pupil of that institution; and the monks were transported with delight that the most popular and highly respected papal-nuncio took up his abode there. On one occasion, when Felix was in a private conversation with the prior, he improved the opportunity to ask the latter concerning his origin.

"You brought me to Rome," Felix said, "when I was a child seven years old. You must know, then, honored father, from whom you received me."

"Most reverend sir," rejoined the prior, "a monk of Mayence, by the name of Thomas, brought you to us. He did it very secretly, and we asked no questions. Very often children are brought to us of whose origin we are entirely ignorant. We educate them as priests and do not concern ourselves about their origin or past. I think you are the son of a great nobleman who wished to keep your birth a secret. Your appearance and conduct as a child evinced very noble qualities."

The brow of the cardinal became obscured. He could not endure the thought that he was of illegitimate birth. He determined to go to Mayence in order to see father

Thomas and discover the truth of him. But the same day he received a letter from Rome, the Pope desired his immediate return.

VII.

THE CLIMAX.

The Emperor had met with repeated success. He marched victoriously through upper Italy and would have captured his enemy, Gregory VII, who was besieged in Castle Engelsburg, but for the Norman Duke, Robert Giscard. The latter came in time to rescue the Pope, and took him to Verna, where Felix also arrived and remained faithful to his friend and former patron. Gregory's health was impaired with the loss of his political power. He was prostrated by a sudden attack of sickness, and soon afterward he died. His last words were: "I loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore I am dying in captivity." On his death-bed he gathered his friends around him and recommended them his trusty Felix as his successor.

The Papal party returned to Rome where they executed the last will of Gregory VII. Cardinal Felix, alias Elchanan, son of Rabbi Simon the Great, was installed as Pope under the name of Victor III, when he was scarcely thirty years old. The Papal crown was at that time the highest of all authority. The Pope ruled over kings and emperors; a large part of the inhabited globe actually lay

prostrate at his feet, and this authority was swayed by such a young man! Was not he the happiest of men? Did not he attain a position which was the highest goal of ambition? Yes, Victor III was actually the greatest of all men of his time, the greatest in power, and above all other men in authority, but happy—he was not!

If we consider the vicissitudes of his life, as we know his history from the cradle till the Papal three-fold crown, we will not find this fact startling at all. From his fourth year up to his sixteenth he had been taught much, and he learned much of a religious system which was quite the reverse of what his Jewish instinct required, (for we must admit that there is such a thing as a "Jewish instinct," in the mental constitution of a Hebrew child.) Since then, there was no time allowed him to reflect on what he learned, or rather to digest it. It had been all mechanical work with him. His eager and sharp mind had been stuffed with one-sided ideas, without allowing him any leisure to see even that there were different religious views which might be worth while considering at least. No sooner was his knowledge sufficient for the purpose of the church than it was immediately set to work to be utilized. From his sixteenth or eighteenth year, Felix was constantly preaching, journeying and working for the benefit of Papacy, as a mere machine. If he had opportunity enough to see the "worldly" or egotistic aims of the Romish church, he had no time to reflect on what he saw; the incessant work he had to perform, the applause of the multitudes at the exhibition of his talents, the appreciation or acknowledgment of his superiors and finally the successive promotions in

position and honors were enough to satisfy any ambition and to give place to no original thought.

But now when he found himself in the very highest position his church could afford, when he was no longer an instrument, but a controlling power, when his will was no more a passive executor, but an active impulse, he commenced to study himself, to penetrate into the significance of what he represented, and found out that if his will was to be guided by his heart and human instincts, the whole machine that he was running was to assume quite a different aspect and work in quite a different direction. But must not all "human" instinct and desire submit to the "divine" ordinances? Must not the "body" be denied for the sake of the "soul"? Certainly, so he was taught, and so he was hitherto preaching to others. In order to create and diffuse regulations to that effect, as his position now required, he must try to penetrate into the depth of Divine law. Victor III grasped eagerly at the Bible, which he hoped would stifle the revolt within him or the struggle between his mind and his duty. A short study of himself caused him to doubt, a longer study of the divine will would "enlighten his soul." So he thought; but to his dismay he found out that the Bible had quite a different bearing than what he knew of it. In fact he *knew* a great many things and *understood* nothing. As the representative of God on earth he wanted, his position obliged him, to understand; but in spite of all this, his comprehension worked in a direction contrary to that of his calling; the Bible taught him something quite different from what the interest of papacy

required. Nature produced him as a *man*, and he could not be God.

In short Victor came to the conviction that papacy is not what the Bible teaches, and as a self-standing divine decree it was too unjust to humanity in general. The "mysteries" of his church he could not understand, and the aim of papacy he found more consistent with human weakness than with divine "grace and justice." He had now either to work in the interest of his position, denying all that is holy and just, or to follow the dictates of his conscience. The former was too degrading a task and the latter was an impossibility.

Once reading the original text of the Bible the verse, שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד took particular hold of his thoughts. He reflected something to the following effect:

"How strange it is that this declaration is so persistently adhered to by the Jews. It is stranger still that I feel as if these words were a dream of my own childhood, or a vision of another world. Can these words have a simple analogy with the principles I am to uphold? The same יהוה אחד declares at another place "no man can see me and live." My church takes the words: "they saw God" in a literal sence. (Acts 10, 41. Luke 24, 41–43 and parallel places) which is an inconsistency with the former. But the words חזה and ראה are different in significance; the former expresses "mental sight" or conception, the latter means physical sight. The original text can be well understood without the christian dogma. From this point, Victor's thoughts branched off in con-

templation of other dogmas and he felt as if he would go insane about these reflections. When with a great effort he started from his seat exclaiming: "Why shall I fret so much about these matters? Cannot I go along with the tide of events as many others have done before me? Why cannot I take care that the interests of my crown should be preserved and leave other matters stand where they are? Who in the world could disentangle these confused abstractions? I, for a certainty, cannot. I cannot even ferret out the mystery of my own origin." Here his ideas took again a different direction. Since his interview with the Prior of St. Jacob's monastery the thought that he was of illegitimate birth was gnawing his heart. He sat down again in melancholy and oppressing reflections, which were suddenly interrupted by a servant.

"Holy father," said the servant, "a german monk desires to have a private interview with your Holiness on a very important subject."

"What is his name? Of what diocese, and of which Order is he?"

"His name is Thomas. He comes from Mayence, and belongs to the Jacobin order."

Victor was struck with this announcement. It took him considerable time to recover presence of mind to see the man, who came so *apropos* to his thoughts, as if sent by special providence. He ordered the monk to be admitted into his presence.

VIII.

THE MUCH-WANTED INFORMATION.

Victor had sufficiently nerved himself to meet father Thomas, and he scrutinized the features and the looks of that man from whom he hoped to obtain information concerning the matter that troubled him so much while the other approached him humbly and kissed his foot. Under ordinary circumstances Victor would have passed without taking notice of the aged monk, for there was nothing peculiar either in his features or in his long grey beard or in his deep-set lustrous eyes. As for Thomas he could scarcely breathe in the august presence of the successor of Peter, and the thought that this God on earth was none else but the Jewish boy whom he had stolen twenty-six years ago was quite overwhelming for him. The poor monk trembled in every limb; Victor understood his emotions and allowed him some time to recover himself.

"You wanted to speak to me privately, Thomas?" asked the Pope after a few minutes of deep silence.

"Yes, Holy father," rejoined the monk with a trembling voice. "I was recently on a visit to Bamberg, my native city, from which I was absent for many years. The Prior of St. Jacob's monastery there told me about the wonderful vicissitudes that occurred in the life of the boy whom I had delivered to the care of that establishment twenty-six years ago. He moreover informed me that your Holiness is very desirous of knowing your origin. I therefore came

here to satisfy the desire of your Holiness, and I hope that the trouble I have taken will meet with just appreciation."

"You shall have no reason to complain about the last, Thomas. Tell me what you know."

The monk then related how the child of Rabbi Simeon of Mayence was stolen from the house of his parents by his arrangement. How he was secretly baptized, and how a strong and protracted sickness had erased from his memory all recollections of the past. He mentioned also the unfortunate fate of the servant girl who had been the cause and instrument of all his schemes; and finished his narrative by a minute description of the kind treatment which the boy had received from his hand until he was brought to the convent of St. Jacob at Bamberg for security sake. The Pope listened attentively to the story of the monk, and when the latter had finished he exclaimed:

"Oh, how clearly I understand now many strange and inexplicable emotions of my heart!" He rose from his seat and paced up and down the apartment for a few minutes in great agitation. He then turned to the monk, and regarding him with a glance as if desirous of penetrating the very depths of his heart, he asked:

"Tell me, Thomas, do you not feel any remorse for the child-theft you have committed? Do you not feel any qualm of conscience about the happiness of a family you have marred, about the grief you have caused to a loving father, about the heart of a tender mother you have broken? Do you not feel any contrition for having presumed to interfere with the arrangements of Providence, having taken a human being while a helpless child and brought him up

to a course of life quite different from that for which God had destined him by birth?"

"Remorse? Contrition?" echoed the astonished priest, "your Holiness is pleased to jest with your humble servant. Shall my conscience reprove me for having rescued a soul from the grasp of hell and returned it unto the Lord? Did not my good work, the best I have ever done in my life, prosper so that the soul that was doomed to eternal damnation has become the holiest on earth, sainted while yet among the living, through my instrumentality?"

"Hell, damnation, eternity and what not," muttered Victor to himself, "all for the purpose of making *life* miserable! Who is the mortal who would undertake to fight delusion. It is too base even to provoke the anger of an honest heart. Listen, Thomas," he addressed the monk, "I shall richly remunerate you for all your trouble, but tell me the truth; does anybody know the secret of my origin besides you?"

"Not one person living, Holy Father," was the answer. "As I had the honor to report, the girl who was my instrument died a few days after the person of your Holiness had been secured, and the men who brought you to me had not the slightest notion who you were, and know not what has become of you."

"Now," said Victor, "you will swear never to betray the fact."

Thomas swore as the Pope required. He then received an appointment to the diocese of Bamberg, with a rich prebend, and having kissed the foot of the Pope he was dismissed.

Since the last occurrence Victor enjoyed neither rest nor ease. The knowledge that he had yet a father and a mother generated in his heart a yearning after them. But how should he come to them? He could not leave Rome, nor could he summon a Jewish Rabbi to his palace without exciting suspicion. The highest church dignitaries, whom the young Pope had superceded in such a wonderful manner, were envious of their superior and would be glad to notice any action which was of a doubtful character, in order to diminish his popularity. His origin had long since been a matter of comment and doubt, but he took pains to create reports that traced his origin to one of the highest Italian families. Now, he had to do all he could in order to delude his enemies from the right track. A direct communication with the Rabbi of Mayence, without any valid reason for the world, would destroy all his labors. But at last he conceived a plan to satisfy his yearning desire without exciting any suspicion. He sent an order to the Archbishop of Mayence, that the Jews of his diocese should abolish some of their religious customs, unless their Rabbi with two other prominent men appear before the Papal throne to prove that such ceremonies are of great significance and of material importance to their lives and habits.

IX.

THE RABBI AND THE POPE.

Rabbi Simeon, the Great, and the elders of the Jewish community were summoned to the Archbishop of Mayence, who addressed them in the following terms:

"It is the will of our Holy See, that the Jewish community of Mayence should abolish the observance of their Sabbath and purification ceremonies. But our Holy Father is as kind-hearted a man as he is a saint on earth. He allows you the privilege of sending a delegation to Rome to prove the necessity of such observances, if you deem it impossible to submit to his soul-saving will. Till the return of your delegates, I am not to enforce his order. Tell me now whether you will follow the injunctions of the Holy Father, or you will send your representatives to plead before his throne?"

"We have heard of the kindness of your Pope," retorted the Rabbi after he had recovered from the first impression this announcement had made upon him. "We have heard also of his great learning. We therefore hope that we shall be able to prove to him how indispensable these ceremonies are for the maintenance of our creed, and at the same time their great importance to our earthly wellfare. We will therefore repair to Rome the day after to-morrow."

"And I will not enforce this regulation until I hear again from the Holy Father."

The whole Jewish community were frightened at the intelligence of this new calamity. Their only consolation

was that the Pope might be moved to withdraw his order by the eloquence and learning of their Rabbi. The following day was immediatly announced as a prayer and fast day, and the whole community assembled in the synagogue to implore the Almighty that he would grant success to the mission of the Rabbi. Tradition says that the prayer "Be thou, O Lord with the mouths of the ambassadors of thy people Israel; teach them what they should speak, enlighten them on what they have to discuss etc.," was composed by Rabbi Simeon the Great on that occasion. The whole congregation accompanied their Rabbi for a distance out of the city, singing that prayer.

Pope Victor III was sitting on his throne, surrounded by all the splendor of his court, when the delegation of the Jews of Mayence was announced. He started up at this announcement as if an electric shock had passed through his frame. But in an instant he recovered sufficient presence of mind to consider his situation, and in order to relieve the fancy of those that surrounded him and by whom his agitation might have been noticed, he asked in an angry voice:

"What do the accursed Jews want here? Who sent them?"

"Your Holiness will please recollect," answered the Secretary, "the order which was sent to the Archbishop of that diocese concerning some Jewish ceremonies to be abolished. There was a clause in that order permitting the Rabbi and other Jewish officials of Mayence to appear before your Holiness in order to prove the validity of those ceremonies."

Victor pretended to reflect a few minutes, and ordered the delegation to be admitted. When Rabbi Simon appeared in the apartment, two other Rabbis following him at a respectful distance, his long gray beard reaching his girdle, his lofty forehead and expressive dark eyes turned toward the Pope, the latter was almost rooted to the spot. But the Rabbi felt a similar feeling. The young man with the three-fold crown on his head and large golden cross on his breast strongly reminded him of the dream he once had concerning his beloved and much lamented child. The old man almost fainted; it was only the consciousness of his duty that upheld him. A few moments of silence again, and Victor asked: "Are you Rabbi Simon of Mayence? You are renowned as a scholar and a poet. Can you defend the ceremonies that I would rather have you abolish?"

"Yes, mighty Ruler, my name is Simon," answered the Rabbi, modestly, "and it pleased my people to entrust to me the office of Rabbi of Mayence. Concerning the ceremonies, I will endeavor to lay before your mighty judgment the reasons we have to observe them, as far as my feeble abilities will allow me; and may the God of grace and justice direct my speech!"

The dignified appearance of the old man, together with the impressive voice which testified to his sincerity while he spoke, made a deep impression on all by-standers. Victor hesitated a short while, and then asked the Rabbi some questions concerning religion, which were answered in a clear and explicit manner. When the Sabbath question was touched the Rabbi grew especially eloquent. He laid out the primary principles of Judaism as a religion which

offered to its adherents the world with all the good that was created in it. God had destined man to labor on what he has to enjoy. Nature has not provided for him either clothes to protect him against the changes of climate or instruments to defend him against his enemies, not even eatables, which are good for him in all circumstances without preparation. Man must labor to contrive for all his necessities himself; therefore God had provided him with an ingenious mind. If the labor of man should continue without intermission he could not exist, his frame requires rest. Therefore day and night intervene, the former for work, the latter for rest. But the intellect of man must also have its spiritual food, of which the knowledge of God is the highest thing, beneficial to both body and soul. For this purpose the Sabbath, the day of rest is ordained. Thus the observance of this day reminds man of his station in creation, of his dependence on God, of his duties toward his fellow man as co-laborers in everything that is needful and good. In short, it is intended to ennoble his mind and to cheer him in his naturally helpless state. The Rabbi gently hinted here that as Judaism is a religion that cares for body and soul alike, its adherents must regard the Sabbath according to the primary idea of this institution.

When the discussion was finished, the Pope said he was praying that the time might speedily come when the Jews will learn to "cast away the body for the sake of the soul," according to the teachings of Christianity. He would therefore not press them at present to abolish what they think imperatively necessary, for he felt certain that God will enlighten their minds, and then they will do it of their

own accord. He then asked the Rabbi to accompany him to his private apartment, as he wanted to consult him concerning some Kabalistical matters. The Secretary was ordered to recall the order that was sent to the Archbishop of Mayence, the court was dismissed, and the Rabbi with the Pope remained alone.

X

THE RECOGNITION.

"PLEASE to take a seat, Rabbi," said Victor when they entered the study, "and answer my inquiries without reserve, for our conversation here will be of a strictly private nature, and no matter what you may say concerning some religious dogmas, your opinion will have no further consequence whatever. In this room you will please regard me as a fellow-scholar, and what your fellow-scholar may hear from you will be ignored by the Pope, unless it is for your own advantage and by your own desire."

The Rabbi's countenance brightened up by this kind address. He modestly complied with the request and promised to utter his opinion freely. Victor took out a Hebrew Bible and commenced to interrogate the Rabbi on such points as most troubled his mind. With his usual quick perception, the Rabbi understood at once that the head of the Romish church was by far not as stout a believer as he ought to be. He therefore explained to him

the theory of faith in general and proceeded to answer the topics of inquiry in particular. Victor listened to his fluent and well-pointed arguments with undisguised delight. A new, hitherto unknown sphere of thought was opened before him by the ablest of its votaries. The significance of man as he is, his relation to his Creator above and the physical world below him, the world as created by God with providence for man's wants, and many more questions of equal importance, were laid out before him in such a rational and comprehensive manner as he never had any conception of. The poetical flavor of the Rabbi's discourse softened his heart, the earnest fervor and eloquence of the old man engaged his strictest attention, and the vast knowledge displayed was delicious food for his eager mind. Every word of the Rabbi found its place in Victor's heart; he listened for a long, long time, and when the Rabbi stopped, he said: "You have my heartiest thanks, Rabbi, for the knowledge which you unfolded to me. I hope you will remain yet for some time in Rome and give me the pleasure of a few more interviews."

"If such is your will, Sire, I must comply; but my family will miss me at home, and my congregation, too, may want my advice."

At the mention of family, Victor arose from his seat. He did not know how to broach the chief subject which he wanted to inquire of the Rabbi. Now, as the opportunity offered itself to him, he trembled.

"Have you a large family, Rabbi? Is your wife living still?" he asked with a stifled voice.

"My wife is living, thanks to the Almighty: my whole

family consists of two sons and a daughter-in-law at home. I have two other sons and two daughters, all of whom are married out of Mayence."

"Is that all the children you ever had?"

"Oh, no," answered the venerable man with a sigh; "I have lost a child, a boy four years old, of remarkable beauty and evincing extraordinary abilities at his tender age. Oh, what did I not hope of that child? I was too proud of him and loved him too much, and it has pleased God to deprive me of him. Just to-day, when I came into your presence, Sire, I was forcibly reminded of his sweet, intellectual face."

"My presence, Rabbi? How so?"

"Pardon me, Sire, if my saying so is in any way not in accordance with the respect due to your august person; but such in fact was the case. My boy was prostrated by a dangerous sickness before I lost him, and I had a dream in which I saw him with a three-fold crown on his head, and a large golden cross on his breast, surrounded by princes and nobles who meekly bowed before him and kissed his feet; just as I beheld you to-day."

"And that son of yours died of his illness?"

"No, Sire, he recovered; but was lost a few weeks afterward without leaving any trace behind him," said the Rabbi vehemently. "We have not even the comfort of knowing where his earthly remains rest."

"How did it happen?"

"Nobody knows. It is supposed that his nurse who died of a raging madness a few days afterward, had drowned him in the Rhine. We left him with her alone,

and when we returned she was lying on the floor in utter unconsciousness."

"What was the name of that boy?"

"Elchanan."

"Elchanan!" echoed Victor running about the room and pressing his forehead with both hands. "Elchanan! What a sound! *Shema Israel* is a sound that haunted me day and night as if familiar from another existence; now there is another sound; Elchanan, Elchanan!" He was pacing bewildered through his apartment repeating that word a thousand times as if trying to recollect where it came from. The Rabbi looked at him, stunned with fright at his curious demeanor and exclamations. Victor suddenly stopped before the trembling old man, crying:

"Elchanan, that is a familiar word. *El chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpir!*" Rabbi Simeon started from his seat at this exclamation, the young Pope fell in his arms crying: "Father, beloved father, I am your lost boy, your Elchanan!"

XI.

HOT CONTROVERSY.

The two delagates who came with Rabbi Simeon to Rome departed on the following day to Mayence to announce the gladdening information that the Pope has been moved by the skillful arguments of their Rabbi to withdraw the order of abolition. The Rabbi himself was detained

by the Pope to "instruct him in the mysterious lore of Kabala."

Rabbi Simeon visited the Pope on the plea of instructing him, and thus father and son had daily intercourse for several weeks without exciting the suspicion of any one. More than a quarter of a century had passed since the innocent child was torn away from the bosom of his father. All the time the spirit and sentiments of the Jewish boy had been stifled, and his extraordinary abilities had been cultivated in quite a different direction than his innate sympathies tended. Hence the struggle that the young Pope had with himself: it was the struggle between a born Jew, and an educated adherent to the Romish church. Victor found in his father a sincere friend, with a sympathetic heart, a cultivated mind and deep learning. Such a friend he would in vain search for among his prelates and Bishops. To that friend he opened his heart freely, from him he sought comfort in his troubles, consolation in his sorrows, and enlightenment on the subjects which he could not understand. The Rabbi, although anxious to see his son converted to the truth, never made any direct remarks concerning the religious differences that existed between them. But the philosophical theories by which he tried to enlighten his son on matters of doubt and inward struggle, were not of a nature that Roman Catholicism could profit by. The young Pope grew thoughtful and abstracted, and this was ascribed by his Bishops to the deep studies in which he was engaged.

In one interview with his father Victor freely confessed that in spite of all the glory which surrounded him he was

not happy, and wanted to be enlightened on the subject of his own self. Rabbi Simeon made a thorough psychological analysis of the mental qualities of his son. He proved that no happiness, no tranquillity of mind can be had by a man whose pursuits in life are contrary to the sympathies of his heart and requirements of his nature. The argument gradually arrived at the point where the Rabbi proved that the heart of a man which is yearning for a union with its God cannot be happy when communicating with him through mediators—God-men and God-women. That as long as the body of man is the tenant of his soul, the former must have its natural requirements, and abstinence is disadvantageous to both alike as well as it is a reproach to the Creator who provided for the body its natural necessities. This was a direct insinuation against the religious profession of Victor: but he had nothing to say in his defence, for he knew his own feelings very well. He became thoughtful for a few moments and then said:

"You are perfectly right, father, but it is not enough that you show me where the evil lies; enlighten me also how I am to remedy it."

"Till now," rejoined the Rabbi, "your inquiries turned on general topics and my answers were to the effect that you should become influenced with the truth and draw consolation from it. But now, my son, you asked me a question directly regarding yourself, and it is my duty as a father to give you my advice. At our first meeting here I related you a dream which I had concerning you twenty-six years ago. I told you only the first part of that dream which has come to such a wonderful fulfillment. At the

termination of that dream I saw you throwing away the three-fold crown and the cross, and becoming my own dear Elchanan again."

"Rabbi Simeon," cried Victor startled at the last remark, "what do you wish me to do? Do you understand the nature of the sacrifice you require?"

"Require?" repeated the Rabbi rising from his seat, "Rabbi Simeon is a Jew, and can a Jew *require* anything from the Pope of Rome? I can not and do not require anything from the head of the Romish church. From this god on earth I could *beg* only that he should suspend his pyres, tortures and soul-saving bulls regarding my people. *Require* I can only from my children who are depending on my advice. To a son of mine, in the situation of your Holiness I would say, cast away the crown that presses your existence so heavily for the sake of your own happiness. To my son I would say, cast off everything that is a barrier between you and those to whom you belong, between you and your God, between you and your own self. Your crown is only a goal of ambition to dispose of the fate of a million human beings in spite of God who created them as free as yourself. The riches which that crown affords you can not take along in the grave, and even while on earth it gives you only your food and clothing and deprives you of many better things which the poorest laborer can enjoy. The love of a family, which your crown can not procure for you, the perpetuation of a race, which your *Holiness* disdains in spite of the laws of God and nature, the felicity of the embraces of a child is more than riches can buy or glory replace. The consciousness of a life spent in harmony with one's self, is much

above any goal of ambition for outward dazzle. The love of a few friends whom we attach to ourselves by honest sympathy, is worth more than subjecting a thousand nations with an iron grasp. If I knew that my son was happy in the belief that has been forced upon him by malevolent superstition, I would not require of him to renounce it, though my heart were to bleed at the cruel separation between him and myself. But if that son should confess to me his unbelief, and I would see that it is only a dazzling and unjust ambition that has taken hold of him and was quelling his better sentiments, I would show him the real worth of what he has, and offer him for it life and truth. I would appeal to his better senses and *require* him to choose the right. But to the Pope of Rome, I narrated a dream and nothing more."

There was a flow of bitterness and aggravation in the address of the Rabbi, every word of which pierced the heart of Victor. He sat with his head reclining on his hand, his face was glowing with emotion like that of the speaker; but his eyes were fixed on the ground not daring to meet the lustrous eye of his father. A torturing silence commenced when the Rabbi finished his address. When Victor recovered and was going to say something, a domestic came in and announced the arrival of a French delegation, which he was requested to attend. He had only time to say: "Father, pray do not repulse me. Come to-morrow." He said it with such an imploring expression that the old man was moved to tears.

XII.

FINAL CONVERSION AND SACRIFICE.

When Rabbi Simeon came the next day he found Victor walking up and down the luxurious apartment. The features of the young Pope were much brighter, and his manner betrayed some cheerful emotion.

"Father," said he as soon as the Rabbi entered the room, "your words of yesterday have made a very deep impression on my heart. I spent the whole night in prayer and God has enlightened my mind on what I have to do in order to avoid extremities. I have made up my mind to stay here and retain all my power and authority. But the last I will utilize for the benefit of my Jewish brethren. I will issue such decrees as will effect the amelioration of their condition throughout the world. I will teach the principles of brotherly love to all the nations that are under my sway. Thus I will become worthy of my origin as a Jew, I will benefit my brethren and besides that will I be useful to the world at large. See what an amount of good I can effect here; but if I give up my position and turn Jew again, nothing more is effected than the addition of one brother to the Jewish community. Truly, I think, the happiness of thousands is worth more than one soul."

"This plan, my son," answered the Rabbi shaking his head, "is good enough inasmuch as it shows your appreciation of what is just and good. It exhibits the best qualities of your heart, but at the same time it shows also that you are ready to sacrifice yourself for the sake of your ambition

to rule, and such a plan can not be the enlightenment of God. You want to retain your authority under false pretenses—that can not be the will of God. Yourself believing in one God you want to preach and effect good in the name of another belief, this can not be the will of God. Suppose even some good could be done by you, the end would never justify such means as you will employ. But even in this work you have reckoned without your host. There are a thousand eyes looking at you and a thousand envious minds to comment on every action of yours. Those who crawl at your feet now, will eagerly take advantage of everything that could become the cause of ruin to you in order to hurl you down from your height, and if you pursue such a course as you propose, they will soon find an opportunity to do so. To reform an institution which is based on principles that are so much in opposition to all dictates of human nature and human rights; to reform a church which subjects its adherents by means of anathema, pyres and tortures, and which takes advantage of the credulity of unenlightened minds to execute its designs, is a work that must be left to God, who alone can effect wonders in the spirit of the times. One man cannot do it, and in the short lifetime of a man such cannot be done. Besides that, no man has a right to sacrifice the felicity of his soul for the sake of others. The soul is not your property; it belongs to God. A man may give away his life for his principles, and that only when there is no other way to maintain them, but the soul, the centre of all good principles, the part of God himself, cannot and durst not be given away. If you return to the fold of Judaism the

gain is much more than a Jewish brother. Your unparalleled example will be the guiding star of many a heart that otherwise might fail under oppression. The spirit of Judaism is to last forever, and your example will thus work for it forever and effect much more than your bulls can effect while you are living. We must first strengthen the ties of faith among ourselves and take care that the purity of our religion be preserved for our offspring, before we think of influencing others with our principles. Let the truth work for itself, and do not try to help it on by means of falsehood, or enforce it by power. As for yourself, I am certain that if you once taste the cup of life with its true blessings, you will soon forget your present glory. The study of God's commandments, the enjoyment of God's gifts, the fond attachment of loving friends, will more than replace all your outward dazzle. While here your plans may fail, your power may be taken from you, and then there will be nothing left to cheer your broken heart, to sustain your sunken soul."

To this effect the Rabbi spoke in kind terms and very calmly. Victor listened very attentively and grew thoughtful. There was a violent struggle going on within the heart of the young man, the Rabbi understood it very well and allowed him time to reflect. At last his better sentiments carried the victory in that struggle. His father's arguments were well understood and the truth was appreciated. Victor called out: "*El Chanan nachlatho benoam lehashpar,*" and threw himself sobbing on his father's breast. Thus the crisis passed off happily, the Pope resolved to assume his right name and follow the destination for which God had created him.

"I follow you, father. Call me Elchanan; that is my right name. I will live and die with my people and for my people."

"To-day a child was given unto me, to-day a son of Israel was born; blessed be the Eternal, the God of Abraham, forever!" exclaimed the exultant father shedding tears of joy.

Rabbi Simeon was dismissed by the Pope in the presence of all his courtiers, and left Rome on the following day. A fortnight later, Elchanan stole away from his magnificent palace. The young man who superseded thousands of ambitious priests in office, who subjected the princes and nobles of the greatest portion of civilized humanity under his sway, at whose feet millions of people crawled in great humility, had thrown away all his glory for the sake of Judaism. In the stillness of a rainy night he left his palace, through a back door, to return to it no more. He left the Papal crown to become one of the multitude. And he did so with joy and delight.

When on the following day the Pope did not appear before the court and the servants reported that he was not seen since last night, there arose a great confusion in the Eternal city. Some supposed that his enemies, the vassals of the German Emperor, had taken his life, others believed that the good and saintly young Pope had gone up to heaven in his earthly frame; while Elchanan was journeying to Mayence with a joyful heart.

XIII.

ELCHANAN.

We will not presume to describe the joy which prevailed in Rabbi Simeon's house at the return of Elchanan. The rejoicing of a mother at the appearance of a beloved and long-bewailed child, the joy of brothers and sisters at the return of a brother whom they had long given up as lost forever, all this can only be felt but not depicted in words. As to Elchanan himself, the first day in the midst of his own he said:

"Father, all that I have left behind me, and a thousand times more, is not worth one hour of to-day's happiness for me. I laugh at myself when I consider how foolish I was in giving you so much trouble before I was persuaded to come here."

"As to happiness, I hope you will learn yet," rejoined the father, "how invaluable is a regulated and quiet life, and you will be happy indeed. Nevertheless you have not to undervalue the deed you have done. A thousand others could not have done it. The consciousness of the great sacrifice you have offered for Judaism will make you value it the more."

From that day Elchanan devoted himself exclusively to the study of Jewish lore under the guidance of his father. His eager mind found the greatest comfort in the rational explanations on the philosophy of life and religion as expounded in the sayings of the wise. In less than a year he succeeded so far in Talmudical knowledge that the title

of *Chaber*, fellow of Talmudical science, was conferred upon him, and he upon whom all degrees of Christian lore were conferred while yet a youth, was overjoyed in his manhood at deserving this first degree of Jewish Scholarship.

Elchanan's reappearance caused great commotion in the community; all kinds of rumors were afloat, but the real truth was not known outside of his family circle, for Rabbi Simeon imposed the strictest secrecy in the matter. One day when Rabbi Elchanan was sitting with his father at his studies it happened that Meshulam, whose daughter Cardinal Felix had rescued, came in on some business to the old Rabbi. But as soon as he noticed the young Rabbi he looked aghast and could not say a word. Rabbi Simeon kindly asked him what was the matter.

"Sir," said Meshulam to Rabbi Elchanan, "if I knew that it were not impossible, I would take you for a distinguished gentleman to whom I am greatly indebted."

"And how is your daughter Rachel?" asked Elchanan smiling.

"How, sir, is it possible that—"

"It is my son, Elchanan," interrupted Rabbi Simeon, in order to preclude any further explanation. But Meshulam could not be checked in such a manner. He insisted upon expressing his gratitude to Elchanan. He implored with tears in his eyes that he may be permitted to bring his daughter that she may see her rescuer once more and personally thank him for what he had done for her. "For," he added, "my girl never ceased to speak of you since that time. She was a child of thirteen when you rescued her from the castle of Rothenfels, she is eighteen years now,

and the impression which your kindness has made upon her is living in her memory as if it happened this very day. Her only desire is to see her redeemer once more. She is my only child and it is my comfort to gratify every reasonable desire of hers. Do it for my sake, do it for her sake, and allow me to bring her here once." Nothing could be done but to confide the family secret to Meshulam and his daughter: for Elchanan himself was also desirous of seeing the girl again.

A few days afterward Meshulam with his daughter visited the house of Rabbi Simeon. Rachel, who was now in the presence of her benefactor, forgot all she intended to tell him; she could not utter a word of gratitude or anything else. But, strange to say, Elchanan himself, who seemed to have granted the introduction only for the sake of gratifying the desire of Meshulam, could not speak much in the presence of the blushing girl who stood before him.

"Oh, papa, that is him!" said Rachel to her father when they entered the room.

"Here is my girl, Rabbi." said Meshulam. "We have come to thank you for your great act of kindness."

"If for that, you need not have taken all the trouble. Please don't mention it again."

Meshulam then informed Rabbi Simeon that he was going to settle down in Mayence, and the other expressed the hope that he would not keep himself a stranger in his house. At that moment Elchanan's mother came into the room. With a true feminine instinct she noticed the confusion of the young people, and when she heard how the Rabbi invited Meshulam to call often at the house she added:

"And Rachel, too, must come to see me often."

"We feel very much honored," said Meshulam. "Rachel, why do you stand there like a goose? Cannot you thank the Rabbi and his wife? I thought you would have so much to say to Rabbi Elchanan; now you stand there like a fool."

"Do not scold her, Meshulam," interrupted the matron. "You gentlemen cannot understand our sex at all. The silent speech of the heart is better than the rattling of a thousand tongues. Never mind, Rachel, I hope we shall become the best of friends yet."

Truly the best of friends they became, for not more than two months passed after Meshulam settled in Mayence when Rachel became the wife of Rabbi Elchanan. Meshulam lived only for his daughter and son-in-law, of whom he was justly proud because of his personal greatness as well as on account of his family connections. Time passed on and Rabbi Elchanan was surrounded by a family of nice children. When he pressed them to his bosom he could not avoid a smile on his past career when he was such a jealous advocate of celibacy.

XIV.

THE CROWN OF GLORY.

THE political horizon was overcast with heavy clouds. Christianity and Islamism were arrayed in furious hostility against one another, and thousands marched under the banner of the cross to the East to conquer the Holy Land. The

jealous piety of the Crusaders, which finally assumed the form of insane rage, was next directed against the Jews. Without the least trouble, without the dangers and calamities of war, the pious warriors could kill and rob defenceless people. By an onslaught against the Jews, it was easy to gratify the basest passions under the cloak of religion. An ignorant mob gathered under the leadership of miserable knights, whose only desire was to gratify their avarice and thirst for blood, and marched through the land like a sweeping pestilence. Dark reports of the cruelties of the Crusaders reached Mayence. Some German Jewish communities had been slaughtered, others had been forced into submission, had forgotten their honor and their duty and embraced Christianity. The Rabbi of Mayence was trembling for his flock.

On a Saturday morning when the whole community congregated to perform the morning service, Rabbi Simeon ascended the pulpit and delivered a brief but stirring address. He was very old and feeble, grief about the gloomy reports from abroad, and anxiety in regard to his own community still more weakened him, so that he could not speak very long. He only narrated the sad news that had reached him, and asked his congregation what they were determined to do when the pestilence reached their vicinity. He reminded them that the community of Mayence was the oldest and most influential in Germany, and their example would be followed by all the other Jewish communities. Will they forget God their Eternal Father in sight of death, which sooner or later must come, or will they stand up courageously against the foe, scorning death and

tortures for the sake of their own souls and for the souls of a hundred Jewish communities whom they will encourage by their example? There was not an eye within the sacred walls that did not shed tears at the Rabbi's discourse, and there was not a heart within the breast of man or woman that did not resolve to offer life for religious principle. After the old Rabbi, Elchanan stood up in the pulpit, and addressed the congregation.

"I am twelve years in your midst," said he, "and I can say that it is only these twelve years that I have enjoyed life. Since my early childhood I have lived under other, apparently much better conditions, but life in reality was everlasting torture to me. It has been a family secret till now, but in the sight of approaching danger it is time that you should know it in order that you shall be able to realize what you have before you if you forsake God." Here he narrated all the events of his life to the astonished multitude. There was his father-in-law, who knew him as Cardinal Felix, and there were the two elders of the community who had been with Rabbi Simeon in Rome and had seen Elchanan on the Papal throne. These gentlemen he called to stand up as living witnesses in the sight of God and Israel. He absolved them publicly from their promise of secrecy, and they stood up and bore testimony to the words of the speaker. At this statement there was a great commotion among the congregation, and when the hum of astonishment and admiration subsided a little, the speaker continued:

"If I, who never knew that I was a Jew, and who knew not much of Judaism, and had not the slightest idea of its

benign influence; if I could not be happy in the fold of a strange religion, how can you ever expect to be happy if you renounce your God! If the greatest splendor in the world that surrounded me could not make me contented, what will, what can make you contented in life? O, I will suffer a thousand deaths rather than live another day in the tortures of such remorse as fastened upon me on the papal throne! Such is my resolution in the sight of God and you all, and whoever is of the same sentiments with myself, let him stand up and we will jointy swear to remain faithful to our God the Eternal."

"The whole congregation rose as one man; the scrolls of the Law were taken from the arch, and a solemn oath was recited by Rabbi Elchanan and repeated fervently by all present.

After a fervent prayer had been offered by Rabbi Simeon, the whole community accompanied their spiritual guide home, singing aloud the famous hymn, "I am a nation strong as a bullwark in faith."

The emotions which Rabbi Simeon had experienced on that Saturday morning were greater than his feeble frame could endure. He sickened that very day and died in peaceful resignation three days afterward. At his death-bed and his bier the solemn promise to remain faithful to God and to His holy Law was repeated by the community whose spiritual guide he had been for forty-five years and who clung to him with child-like affection.

Rabbi Elchanan was unanimously elected as his successor.

Before the thirty days of mourning for Rabbi Simeon

the Great were over a murderous band of Crusaders arrived at Mayence. All the Jews of that city were driven out on the square near the Synagogue, a pyre was lit in the middle of the square and a thousand bloodthirsty villains formed a line around the doomed community that none should escape. The Knight of Rothenfels, who had turned a friend of papacy since he saw that he could satisfy his avarice under its sanction, was the leader of that band. He addressed Rabbi Elchanan, as the spiritual guide of the community, giving him the choice between embracing Christianity or dying in the flames.

"Knight, Rothenfels," answered Rabbi Elchanan coolly, "we met once under different circumstances. Do you remember Cardinal Felix and the destruction of your castle fourteen years ago? Look at me and recognize the man who chastized you for your faithlessness and robbery You know that Cardinal Felix had became Pope Victor III, and absolved your transgressions. Look at me and recognize the man whose foot you have kissed with humiliation and whom you have to thank for your liberty and life. I have given up all the papal glory for Judaism, the blessings of which I scarcely knew yet, and I am not going to give up what I prized more than a three-fold crown and the richest throne in the world, for the sake of a few years of miserable life. Let the coward do so whose life is identical with his earthly possessions. and who has nothing to hope for in Eternity. I will die for my God and his holy commandment."

The astonishment of the Knight can better be imagined than described, but in an instant his brutal passion took

the place of all other sentiments. He called to his followers: "Baptize or kill!" The Rabbi called to his own: מי ל"ה אלי "Who is for the Lord, follow me!" and cheerfully ascended the steps of the pyre. His own relatives and the elders of the community who stood nearest to him followed him closely. "The Eternal, our God, is One in unity," was heard from amid the flames. "The Eternal, our God, is One in unity," echoed a thousand voices dying under the murderous weapons of the Crusaders. Not one Jew of Mayence gave up his belief for his life; the whole community died for the sake of their principle.

Archbishop Ruthard and Count Emicho, under whose authority Knight Rothenfels acted, divided among themselves the spoils of the martyrs; but two years afterward the former was called to account for it before Emperor Henry VI, and was banished for life. Of the whole band of Crusaders not a single man reached the pinnacle of his desire. They were all killed by the Hungarians, whose territory they wanted to cross. The flames of the pyre at Mayence caught also the Synagogue and the Jewish houses around and reduced them to ashes. That memorable place therefore bears the name "*der Brand*" to the present day.

END.

THE FALL OF BETHAR AND THE MARTYRS.

I.

THE LAST STRUGGLE.

HE insurrection of the Jews against the yoke of Lucius Quietus, was suppressed by the new Emperor of Rome, Hadrian, in the year 119, A.C. The tyrannical governor of Judea, Quietus, was called back to Rome, and Tinius Rufus succeeded him. A treaty of peace was concluded, the Jews laid down their arms, a promise being given to them that they would be allowed to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem, and repair the ruins of the holy city. But although the appeased Jews tried to show every mark of honor and gratitude to the new Emperor, who seemed himself to have some kind of predilection for this people and their learned rabbis, these peaceful arrangements were of short duration, for the spirit of the people was soon roused again by new aggravating events.

Hadrian, misled by the advice of Jewish enemies, and not being able to withdraw his promise altogether, gave orders that the temple should not be rebuilt on the same site where the former one stood, which showed plainly that

he did not intend to carry out his treaties of peace. The new governor of Judea also began to show his claws. The indignant Jews would have rebelled at once had it not been for the calming influence of Rabbi Jehoshua, who understood so well how to pacify his beloved nation by eloquent speeches and wise parables. But their confidence in the Roman government was gone, they became weary of being trifled with by the new Emperor, and were aggravated by fresh outrages of the governor, Tinius Rufus. A crisis was at hand. While Hadrian was on his way to Syria and Egypt they used the opportunity to prepare quietly against any new encroachments on the liberty of their conscience.

The new star and leader of the Jewish warriors was the brave and inspired youth Simeon Bar-Cochba.* Around him all the friends of liberty rallied in mass (about 400,000 men). Arms and provisions were collected in subterranean places. This great work was performed with such precaution that the Roman government had not the least idea of what was going on, notwithstanding its great number of spies. In the meantime R. Jehoshua died, (about 131, A. C.). Rabbi Akiba, his successor in the spiritual leadership of the people, was full of youthful enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, and did all he could to encourage Bar-Cosiba and his warriors.

The war broke out at last, and the Jewish troops took possession of the strong fortress of Bethar and a great many minor fortresses and cities, which were left to them

* His real name was Bar-Cosiba, according to Grätz's history of the Jews, vol. IV, c. 8, called after his native city Cosiba. Two cities of the name were at that time in Judea.

one after another by the cowardly Rufus; he himself fled to Rome to inform the Emperor in person of the progress made by the Jews. The revolutionists gained strength and courage with every new success, and in about two years they became masters of nearly the whole of their ancestral land. Hadrian watched with the greatest anxiety these startling events; in vain did he send new reinforcements to the frontiers of the freed province: his generals were beaten on the fields of Judea and his troops could not withstand the attack of the Jews. At last the Emperor called for his greatest general Julius Severus, who was at that time in Britain, and sent him to Judea with an immense army of soldiers. We scarcely need mention here that during these two successful years of the reign of Bar-Cochba measures were taken for rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem; but it is worthy to be remarked that although the Jews were embittered with relegious hatred against the Romans, it is nowhere mentioned that they treated cruelly their captives or any one of the *heathen* population of the conquered grounds.

Julius Severus arrived at last and commenced his operations against the Jews; more than fifty battles were fought before the Romans surrouded the city of Bethar where the main force of the Jews were concentrated. Severus was too experienced a general not to know that he could accomplish nothing by giving a general battle to the religiously inspired Jewish army, flushed by success. He resolved, therefore, to worry and weaken them by skirmishes and to starve them out. The siege of Bethar lasted about a year, and the besieged did not suffer much, for

their communication with other cities was kept open by means of subterranean passages. They had no lack of provisions. The Roman general had already resolved to give up the campaign as hopeless, had it not been for the treachery of a Samaritan, who informed him of the secret passages. At the same time Barcochba lost much prestige with his warriors by allowing himself to be provoked into maltreating the most beloved spiritual guide of the doomed city, the pious Rabbi Eliazar of Modin.

The Roman soldiers penetrated the city by means of the betrayed passages, and a fearful slaughter began, which ended with the whole destruction of the city. Bar-Cochba fell, and with him Bethar. The conqueror having found among the dead his corpse with a serpent gnawing at it, exclaimed: "If God had not slain thee, by the hands of men thou couldst never have fallen!"

After the fall of Bethar there remained but little work to be done in Judea. It is true, the Jews did not lay down their arms. Conscious that nothing was to be hoped from the mercy of the victors, they defended heroically every city which they had gained, and the whole Jewish nation, as Grätz expresses it, lay on the grounds of their ancestral land like a vast body exposed to slaughter.

The loss of the Romans was immense; Hadrian reporting to the Senate the result of the battle, did not dare to use the usual sentence: "Myself and the troops are in a good condition;" he spoke only of himself, nor did he receive the marks of honor which were given to the emperors after a successful campaign. But what availed this to the Jews? They were utterly crushed, and Hadrian de-

vised the severest measures, in order to prostrate them completely, and to extinguish the last spark of chivalry that might have been left in them. Few, very few Jewish warriors saved themselves, some escaped to Arabia Felix, some to Babylon ; the others were either slain by thousands or died of starvation in subterranean holes and coverts. The carnage and horror of that war were the greatest ever known in Jewish history, and in commemoration of the *Polemos acharon* (last insurrection), the synagogue abolished the ceremony of carrying the bride on a velvet couch to the house of her bridegroom, which was the custom until that time.

II.

HADRIAN AND THE JEWS.

After the fall of Bethar, which happened on the fatal 9th of Ab, 135 A.C., Hadrian considered every Jew his personal enemy, and devised every form of cruelty and oppression to tyrannize this unhappy race, both mentally and physically. The last three years of his reign are known in Jewish history as the time of *Sakanah* (danger) and *Geserah* (tyranny).

The coward Tinius Rufus, who did not dare to face the Jews in arms, was again appointed governor of Judea, and governed the Jews and their land with an iron grasp. The city of Jerusalem was rebuilt and consecrated as a heathen

town, with the name *Aelia Capitolina*, so that even her former name (sacred to the Jews) should no longer exist. She was populated with invalid Roman soldiers, Phœnicians and Syrians, as a Roman colony. On the place where the temple formerly stood, there were erected statues of Hadrian and of Jupiter Capitolinus, and other images of abomination were placed in different parts of the city and throughout the Holy Land. All this was done for the purpose of rooting out from the heart of the Jews every feeling of respect and love for their ancestral land, so that a Jew should never think of the sacred ground without horror while he imagined all the detestable things which were seen there. But this plan worked quite differently on the faithful Jewish heart. They considered all these circumstances as a punishment for their sins and never ceased to love what was once declared holy.

The following statement gives a clear idea of the individual treatment of the Jews by Hadrian:

"A Jew met the emperor in the street and saluted him; Hadrian ordered the courteous Jew to be beheaded, because he dared to trouble his majesty with his politeness. Shortly afterward, another Jew met him and did not salute him; he was also ordered to be killed for his indifference. The council, asking the emperor the reason of two such contradictory actions, received the answer: 'Will you dictate to me how I am to revenge myself on my enemies!'"

Special notice was taken by the oppressors of all the religious observances of the Jews. A decree was issued prohibiting the observance of the Sabbath day, the ceremony of circumcision, marriage, the study of the law and

installment of rabbis, under penalty of death. Hadrian, says Grätz, imitated the policy of Antiochus Epiphanes, forcing the Jews to reject their faith and to accept paganism instead. The only difference between the two was, that the former tried to deprive them of their religious observances, thinking that their conversion to paganism would fellow as a consequence; while the latter actually forced them to worship his idols.

The emperor issued such decrees, and Rufus, who, it is said, was well versed in the Jewish law, knew how to enforce them. They were well aware that as long as there were religious institutions among the Jews, there was a chord which united their hearts and minds. and that they would avoid no means for promulgating their ideas and gathering strength and sympathy.

So the Jewish race lay prostrate under the tyranny of their enemies; and such were the means devised to exterminate their lofty ideas of God, truth and morality, lest they should take root in the hearts of others. But with all these measures the enemies of light did not succeed in suppressing its beneficial influence. Israel received the promise: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn," and it was kept to them until the present time. The great truths which were in trusted to them on Mount Sinai were destined to become the light of all nations in spite of all cruel efforts to extinguish them. But the Jews also were true to their trust, and it was only Israel's resolute mind which could retain the sacred mission under such circumstances.

How sublime were the words of Moses when pleading the cause of his people before God: "Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a *stiff-necked* people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance," thus giving the stiff-neckedness as a reason why Israel was worthy to become the people of the Lord.

The Roman spies were very vigilant in watching the Jews in their religious performances. "When they heard the noise of a hand-mill they suspected the preparation of wood-powder for the purpose of circumcision; when they saw lights in a Jewish house they thought that a marriage ceremony was being performed." But the Jewish doctors found an apportunity to convene a Sanhedrim, and to confer about the cardinal principles of the law. It was in a garret room in Nithsa, a small town in Lydda, where R. Tarphon, R. Akiba, R. Jossi, of Galilee, and other rabbis assembled, and passed resolutions to the following effect:

"Whereas, the study of the Torah brings about a practical performance of its injunctions, and every religious performance endangers the life of a Jew, therefore resolved, that studying the law is of more importance than its practical performance, and that all its precepts may be disregarded where there is danger of life: except idolatry, murder, and adultery, which an Israelite should not commit, even if he is put to death for abstaining from them."

Such were the cardinal principles unanimously adopted and adhered to in that time, and we may glory in them in our enlightened age. The rabbis of that convention suffered martyrdom shortly afterward, of which we are now to speak.

III.

THE MARTYRS.

CONSIDERING the incidents narrated in the two former chapters, it will be no wonder that the rabbis who attended the convention were looked after very closely. They were not caught at the synod, for they assembled in a quiet and hidden place; but there were spies * enough to ascertain the fact that such an assemblage had taken place, and who the persons were that had taken part in it. So an ancient tradition tells us of ten martyrs who bled for their

* Dr. Grätz counts Achar (Elisha-ben-Abujah,) among the Roman spies, of which I cannot see the probability. Besides the characteristics of that man, which do not agree at all with such an hypothesis, and from all the stories told about him, it seems that he played his rôle of a regenade after the death of Hadrian, when there was no opportunity for him to be a spy. "R. Mayir left his seat in the pulpit when he was told by his deciples that Elisha was passing by," (Medrash Koheleth). Now R. Mayir had no seat in the pulpit and no deciples at that time, for he was ordained by R. Jehudah-ben-Baba, one of the last mayrtrs. Besides, how was it possible to think of a public place of worship when every religious performance was punished with death?—Even the same Hagadah (Jer. Chagiga) of which Dr. Grätz cites an instance, speaks of a public place of studying the law, where Achar came and said that the disciples should rather do some business than study the law (which we think is the meaning of קיצין בנטיעות.) His speaking against their carrying loads on a Sabbath under various pretexts is only mentioned as one of his arguments against their doings but not as information to the government.

adherence to the principles of their creed. This sad event was lamented in glowing terms by the old authors; but in the Hagadas of the Talmud, both Babli and Jerusalmy, there cannot be found a reliable historical account as to who they were or at what time they sustained their doom.

We shall give here a short account of those who are proven beyond a doubt to have lived at that time.

The two first were R. Ishmael ben Elishah and R. Simon, of the royal family of David.* They both were to suffer death at one time. It is touching to read how each of them wanted to die first, so that he should not see the death of his brother; R. Ishmael honoring his fellow-martyr for his royal aristocracy, and R. Simeon responding to it by honoring the other one as the high priest. They comforted each other while under torture. R. Akiba delivered an oration on their death; soon afterward his own turn came to die by the hand of the tyrant. R. Akiba was taken to prison for preaching the law to an assembly of his co-religionists. It seems that he was held there a

* Concerning the person of Rabbi Ishmael the historians are not certain who he was, because the tradition called him a high priest, and there was no high priest of that name since the destruction of the temple. That was also the reason why some were of opinion that R. Simeon, who suffered myrtrdom with him, was R. Simeon, the Patriarch, and this occured at an earlier period. But we are inclined to think that R. Ishmael was *nominated* high priest by Bar Cosiba, who began to rebuild the temple in his reign, and retained the title though he never officiated as such. It was then the same R. Ishmael who was released from prison by Jehoshua ben Chananiah for a great sum of money (see Bab. Gettin, fol. 58 and Midrash Taanith.), who was of the family of priests.

very long time, and Rufus, who well knew his influence and authority among the Jews, took special care that his prisoner should be guarded very strictly, so that nobody should come to see him.

The rabbis, who wanted his decisions on religious questions, invented a curious way of communicating with him. They disguised themselves as peddlers, and passing the prison, called: "Who buys needles? Who buys forks? What about the law of dispensation for marrying the late brother's wife?" and the prisoner understood the hint and gave his decision in a like manner.

A certain Rufus bar Tuda warned the rabbi that he had better give up preaching, because of the wacthfulness of the Roman spies, and received the following answer: "A fox once said to a fish, 'You are in so great danger in the waters, because of the nets spread by man: better come out to the shore where there is no such danger for you.' 'No,' answered the fish, 'if we are not safe in our own element, how greater a risk should we run in an element foreign to us?' The Torah," continued the rabbi, "is our element, and there is much more danger for us if we abandon it than if we adhere to it."

The hour for martyrdom finally came for this great man, who had been such a strong pillar to the synagogue, and whose life had been so active and useful. The tyrant Rufus ordered his skin to be torn off with currycombs, and in this fearful agony the martyr preserved a joyful mien, and repeated his prayers. The tyrant observing his smiling countenance, asked him whether he was not a sorcerer. "No," answered the martyr, "I am only glad that

I have the chance to serve my God with my life, while till now I served Him only with my might." His soul departed while his lips pronounced (God is) "ONE." His colleagues lamented him: "With his death was broken the arm of the law, and the spring of wisdom became dry."

R. Chanina ben Teradion died for the same crime as R. Akiba; he was caught studying the law, and when he was asked why he disregarded the decrees of the emperor, he answered simply: It is the orders of my God I am obeying." In his death he gave the most glorious lessons of belief in the holiness of the law and in the immortality of the soul. Before his execution, he suffered the anguish of seeing his wife killed and his two daughters outraged. Then he was wrapped in the roll which he studied, and put on a pyre of fresh ivy branches; a wet sponge was placed on his breast in order that his sufferings should not soon end. His daughter exclaimed: "Father, must I see you in such a state?" And he answered: "Do not be so grieved; if I was burned alone it would perhaps be grievous, but now a scroll of the law is burned with me; God, who is certain to avenge the abuse of His holy Torah, will avenge me also." To the crowd of disciples who witnessed the fearful drama, he said amid his tortures: "I see the parchment consuming in the flame and the letters flying up to heaven." The executioner being affected by the sight, told him to take from his heart the wet sponge that he should die sooner; but the rabbi refused to do so, saying: "The One who gave me the soul may take it whenever it pleases Him, I have no right to hasten the time by a single second."

The executioner took the sponge from his heart and sprang into the flames and was burned with the rabbi.

After the death of these rabbis, the synagogue was in a very bad condition for want of leading men, and Rabbi Jehuda ben Baba resolved to ordain five of the best disciples. He selectd a desert valley far from town where he would perform the ceremony in secret. But he was found out by the Romans, and the enemy came to the spot just when the ceremony was over. R. Jehuda seeing them come, persuaded the newly-ordained rabbis to fly. He showed them that they could not save him if they remained, and how great a loss it would be for the synagogue if they died with him. To their remonstrance that they would not desert him in such danger, he said: "I am like a heavy stone which cannot be turned," thus giving them in a few words to understand that he was firm enough to die for his religion, and that he was too old to be of such great use to the synagogue as they. They fled, and the rabbi was pierced by Roman spears.

It would be too much for the feelings of our readers if we should describe the history of all the other martyrs mentioned in the Talmud. The few examples we have given will suffice to remind them how gloriously our ancestors could die for their convictions, and how, in their agonies, they gave the most wholesome instructions in the highest moral principles.

The dreadful time lasted till the death of Hadrian. His successor, Titus Antonius Pius, repealed the tyrant's decrees and a new generation of Tanaim arose for the maintenance of our eternal creed.

THE CONVERTED NOBLEMEN.

A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.

I.

THE PEAR-TREE IN THE OLD GRAVEYARD.

N my early childhood I had a strong liking for lonely rambles. I never felt so happy as when I could roam about for a few hours undisturbed, musing and building "castles in the air." My native city, Wilna, being situated in a most picturesque valley, and surrounded by hills, forests, meadows and rivu lets, offers the best advantages for such enjoyments as I liked. When Napoleon I passed this place on his fatal march into the interior of Russia, he was struck with its beauty, and declared that he had never seen a spot to compare with it. The dreamy forests, the mysterious glens, the gay, flower-strewn meadows, and the murmuring crystal springs on every side, form a wonderful variety of scenery to satisfy the most extravagant imagination.

The spot I liked best was the new graveyard, which is

laid out on a hill overlooking a magnificent landscape. I could roam about there for hours, or sit on a favorite hillock, calling into life a thousand familiar biblical scenes. The Bible was then the whole storehouse of poetical or historical imagery to which I had access. The Willeyka, a small river flowing at some distance from the burial-ground, would appear to me the river Kebar, at which I in imagination saw the prophet Ezekiel standing in solemn dignity and recalling unto life "the dried bones that filled the valley." Or I would imagine seeing a multitude of workingmen cutting the woods of *Lebanon*, and others erecting the Temple of *Jerusalem*, or the prophet Elijah sitting on *Mount Carmel;* all these biblical names actually belonging to localities which were visible in the hazy distance from the new graveyard. I cannot describe the felicitous emotions which these visions aroused in me, and how happy I felt in the midst of the life which my imagination had created around me.

My parents did not like the manner in which I passed my time. My frequent visits to the graveyard caused them special anxiety, partly because it was at a considerable distance from our house, and partly on account of a superstitious belief that evil spirits have their abode in graveyards and may become dangerous to those who are not on their guard. But my father who did not believe in using strong measures to enforce injunctions or prohibitions upon his children, undertook to counteract my foolish fancies in his own mild way. Whenever I was allowed a few hours of recreation or a holiday, in which he knew I would invariably betake myself to my lonely ram-

bles, he would ask me whither I proposed to go and whether I had any objection to his company. I was always glad to be in the society of my aged father, for he was very indulgent and sociable. He understood how to direct my extravagent whims with suggestions which never appeared like commands, and were therefore willingly followed. In this manner he became my constant companion on my solitary walks, and beside all evil consequences of my peculiar inclination being averted by his paternal care, the time on such expeditions was utilized by him for developing my mind with instructive narratives.

One summer's afternoon he offered to take me to the *old* graveyard, where I had never been before. On our way thither he told me that the French army stopping in Wilna in the year 1812, had encamped around those consecrated grounds and had destroyed many graves and sacred memorials. Since that calamity, only a small portion of the grounds had been owned by the Jewish community, a few tombstones in memory of great scholars still standing there in a tolerably good state of preservation. The site of the new churchyard had been purchased for a burial-ground.

Arriving at the old graveyard my father showed me the graves and read and explained to me the epitaphs on the tombstones. While he was telling me the history of some great men whose grave we had visited we reached a pear tree which stood on a hillock near by. Six or seven boys were playing there, throwing stones at the tree to bring down the ripening pears. My father called to them to stop, remarking: "The tree is too sacred a memorial

to be spoiled by Jewish boys." His dignified appearance and kind address caused them to obey him; and when I asked him to tell me the story of the tree, the boys joined in the request. The kind, old man sat down upon the grass, I at his feet, and the boys reclining around us, listened with eager attention to the story of the converted noblemen, which I propose to tell you in the following pages.

II.

THE LITHUANIAN JERUSALEM.

THE natural advantages of the region surrounding Wilna with regard to fertility of soil and abundance of sweet, spring-water, and the picturesque landscapes that inframe the city itself have suggested for Wilna the appellation of "the Lithuanian Jerusalem." The Israelites of that and adjacent regions had more reason yet to acknowledge its claim to that title. Wilna has been the seat of Jewish wisdom and learning ever since it was built up by the Lithuanian prince Giedymin, in the year 1382. Notwithstanding its comparatively young existence, the list of the great men who have arisen in the Jewish community of Wilna, can hardly be equaled by that of any other city in Europe. The Lithuanians have been an idolatrous, but an hospitable and liberal-minded people. The constitutions of that country allowed liberty of conscience to all, and therefore Israelites, Huguenots, Greek-Catholics and confessors of other creeds

who suffered from the iron rod of Papacy, sought a refuge in this corner of Europe. Thus Wilna, the capital of Lithuania, became the gathering place of many great minds, especially of the Jews, from all parts of Europe.

When Jagiello, a Lithuanian prince, became king of Poland, the Christian religion (namely, Roman Catholicism) was introduced in Lithuania. This effected much its broad liberal character; but it continued yet for some time to be the most liberal country in Europe, partly because the character of the Lithuanians could not be changed at once with the adoption of the new creed, and partly because Papacy had yet to take deep root in that soil before it could bear its "soul-saving" fruits. The Jewish community of Wilna had in the meantime become one of the greatest in Europe, and having produced many great men, it commanded the respect and gained the adherence of all sister communities.

In the year 1547, Henry d'Anjou—of the *de-Valois* family—who distinguished himself in the battles of Jarnac and Montcontour against the Hugnenots, was called upon to become king of Poland and prince of Lithuania. A swarm of Jesuits came into these countries with him and established there their institutions. Hé treacherously deserted the throne of Poland, when his brother Charles IX of France died. He stole away from Crakow, then the capital of Poland, to Paris, where he succeeded to his brother's throne and assumed the name of Henry III, of France. But he left a legacy to the country he deserted for which its history will condemn his memory forever. A branch of the Jesuitical order became established in

Poland and Lithuania, which has become the ruin of these countries.

As soon as the Jesuits succeeded in sneaking into the favor and confidence of the freemen (called *Schliacheztwo*) they commenced to irritate them against all those who did not confess the Roman religion, especially against the Jews. In the time of Stephen Batory, the successer of d'Anjou, the freemen had already began to protest against the privileges enjoyed by the Jews of Wilna. Their protestation assumed a more formidable character in the time of Sigmund Vasa III, and broke out into the most violent persecution of Lutherans, Calvinists, Greek-Catholics, and Jews. At last they succeeded in having the privileges of those religious sects limited to a considerable extent.

Encouraged by this success, the freemen undertook to carry their plan outside the limits of their own land. They presumed to encroach upon the liberties of the Cossacks, a neighboring Slavonic tribe of a savage and freedom-loving character, and confessors of the Greek-Catholic creed. This was the actual cause of the ravages and devastations which the ferocious Haydamacks (Cossacks) have committed in Ucraïna, Lithuania and Poland under the leadership of Bagdan Chmielnizky. Enraged against their oppressors, these savages swept through the whole region twice (in the years 1648 and 1655) leaving in their track blood and ruin. Not discerning between friend and foe, but slaughtering and burning all that came in their way, the Haydamacks committed the greatest outrages also against our co-religionists. The rememberance of these events is inscribed with blood on the pages of our history under the name of

גזרת ת"ח ותט"ו. The city of Wilna was spared from the first attack of the Cossacks; but not so from their second attack on the unfortunate regions of Poland and Lithuania.

The Jewish community of Wilna continued in its spiritual greatness, notwithstanding all the oppressions it had endured, and all the losses it had suffered from internal and external calamities.

But the social position of the Lithuanian and Polish Israelites were gradually reduced until, in the year 1742, the freemen of Wilna succeeded in wresting from the government a most oppressing decree against the Jews. It was about that time that the Fountain and Guardian of truth was pleased to show by a most wonderful miracle, that "His word stands forever."

III.

POTOZKY AND ZRIEMBY.

Potozky and Zriemby were among the highest nobilities of those countries. Count Potozky was an elderly Polish nobleman, the owner of vast estates in the suburbs of Wilna. He was a great enemy of the Jews and was the first in the council of noblemen who signed the petition of the freemen concerning the limitation of the privileges enjoyed by the Jews. Zriemby was of an old Lithuanian family, the Hettman, or governor-general of the district of Bialostoky, on the borders of Volhynia. He was a friend

of the Jews and—report says—had an intimate friend, an Israelite, who came to his manor very often and spent a great deal of time with the kind old Hettman, narrating to him Jewish stories and legends.

During the century which had elapsed since the time that it was swept over by the Haydamacks until the time we are treating of, Lithuania had recovered from the effects of the invasion. Wilna had again become the favored seat of the nobles of both countries, and nominally it was still the capital of Lithuania, although virtually the last was no longer an independent kingdom, as it had been before. There was a very flourishing University in Wilna, which counted among its students two noblemen, the sons of Potozky and Zriemby, who were fast friends. Of these two young men, the former had his inherited prejudices against and the latter predilections for the Jews. The Jewish question had frequently been the subject of discussion between them, and Potozky's prejudices very often gave way to the milder judgment of his friend. But as he had no direct communication with any Jew, such controversies for a time had no further consequences. One summer's afternoon Potozky, while on a stroll in the forest of Lebanon, met a middle-aged Israelite who appeared sunk in deep meditation. He jokingly accosted him:

"I say, Jew, what are you thinking about? I will lay a wager that you are scheming some plan for deceiving a Christian."

"I should not be worthy of being called a Jew were my mind occupied with such thoughts," replied the Hebrew.

"I am a student of the Holy Law, which enjoins uprightness and kindness to all."

"Nicely spoken, my man," resumed Potozky; "but I am too sly a bird to be caught in such a snare. Does not your Law enjoin hatred for your enemies, and do you not regard as such all those who do not believe in your creed?"

"The Law of God knows no hatred or animosity; it teaches us to be kind even to our enemies, be they Jews or not Jews."

"And pray tell me, on what grounds does it make such injunctions? It is a dogma which I never expected to hear from a Jew."

"Our Holy Law teaches that the soul of man is immortal; that the felicity of the future is beyond the comprehension of mortals, and the happiness of this life is very insignificant in comparison with it. How, would a millionaire hate a person who has robbed him of a few pennies? Believing thus in immortality, we cannot hate those who wrong us in this life." *

The young nobleman became thoughtful. His mind was

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*This was exactly the sentiment expressed by Rabbi Menachem Man before he expired. He was an intimate friend of R. Abraham-ben-Abraham, born Count Potozky, and suffered martyrdom on the 17th of Ab in the same year, with his noble friend and fellow-martyr, the convert. The history of that great man is recorded in the book עמודי בית יהודה and mentioned by S. I. Fin, in his work קדיה נאמנה on the History of Wilna. The last mentioned in brief also the convert Potozky; he could not give any lengthy account of the history of his conversion, probably on account of the Censor of Russia, where his work has been printed.

sufficiently developed to understand the strength of the argument.

"So, you consider yourself much above us," he said musingly.

"Not at all, my lord. We are all human beings, with body and soul. What makes one great cannot be the degradation of another. The paths of truth, justice and righteousness are open to all men alike."

Potozky was quite astonished to hear a Jew proclaiming principles of which "the only soul-saving church," under the tuition of which he had been brought up, never gave him an idea. His kind heart and really noble mind approved of these principles.

"Go your way, my friend," he kindly addressed the Jew, "and excuse me for having detained you. If your thoughts are really running on such topics, I am sorry for the rude manner in which I accosted you."

"Never mind, my lord," said the Hebrew with peculiar emphasis, "my time has not been lost. I have sown the seed of truth which, by the help of God, will bear good fruit. Your heart and mind are much better than your manners, but for the last you are not to blame. God bless you."

A few moments afterward, Potozky met his friend.

"I say, Zriemby, I am inclined to think that you are right after all in taking the part of the Jews. I have just spoken to one of them and he made a great impression on me. There was a peculiar kind of dignity and loftiness about him."

Since this interview with the Israelite, Potozky felt dis-

satisfied with the moral teachings he had received from his spiritual guides. The few words he had heard from the Jew were more in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, with his position as a nobleman—a *noble man*, as he analyzed the word—and with the sympathies of his heart than all the morals he had ever heard from his religious teachers. He sometimes reproached himself for not having requested the Jew to explain to him his principles more fully. His eager mind wanted to understand them better and to learn how to reconcile them with practical life. He often deliberated with Zriemby on this subject, and the two friends made up their minds to learn something more of Judaism as soon as they could.

Some time afterward the two friends had accomplished their course of studies in the University of Wilna and were sent to Paris to obtain a higher degree of education and a knowledge of the world.

III.

THE STUDY OF JUDAISM.

At the time when the fate of the Israelites assumed such a gloomy aspect in the Slavonian countries, the light of their philosophy began to send forth its rays among all nations of Europe. Holland had been a refuge place for the Jews since the time of William of Orange. The German scholars have taken a great interest in Hebrew

literature since the time of Reuchlin, the forerunner of Luther. Whatever the object of such scholars may have been in penetrating the vast domains of Hebrew lore, the result was—as it naturally must have been—that the more the ideas of our sages became diffused, the more did all prejudice vanish. In France there existed about that time the great Bible critic Richard Simon, whose genuine scholarly researches led him to concieve a very favorable opinion of Jews and of their religious philosophy. He uttered his ideas in his works: *Histoire critique du Vieux testament*, which became popular in a very short time and contributed much toward dispelling the prejudices against the Jews. When Potozky and Zriemby arrived at Paris the significance of Judaism and its literature was discussed in all circles of society. Many prominent scholars had Rabbis to instruct them in Hebrew literature. Our heroes had ample opportunity to hear much about the subject which interested them so greatly.

Promenading in a garden they once noticed an old Hebrew sitting in the shadow of a tree with an open volume before him. He was so absorbed in its contents, that he gesticulated and read aloud, forgetting that he was in a public place. The two young nobles seated themselves near him, awaiting an opportunity to draw him into a conversation.

"May I ask you what kind of book you have here?" said Potozky as soon as the Israelite raised his eyes from his volume.

"It is a work of one of our philosophers," answered the Hebrew. "I have been trying for a long time to procure

it, and to-day I received it from a friend at Amsterdam."

"Would you please tell me what is the purport of this work, and by whom it was written?"

"The book is called 'A Guide for the Erring;' its object is to expound the system of Judaism in its true rational sense; its author was our illustrious Maimonides."

"But can a religious system be expounded 'in a truly rational sense?' It seems that the very word *religion*, which implies the idea of *faith*, requires its adherent *to believe what can not be understood.*"

The old man looked up with astonishment at his youthful interrogator. He had regarded his questions as prompted merely by curiosity; but now he saw that there was much more than that. Reflecting for a moment, he answered slowly.

"I do not know what the word 'religion' may imply. The system of Judaism is not based on 'believing what can not be understood.' The Hebrew tongue has no word for 'faith' in the sense in which it is generally understood. Trust, confidence, reliance in God, is all that our religion —if you choose to call it so—enjoins. It demonstrates by rational argument that there is a God; and when this truth is once embraced all other injunctions follow as logical consequences, and cannot be gainsayed."

"Excuse me, my friend," said Zriemby, "but I think that your definition is not altogether correct. You will admit that the Bible is the basis of your religious system. Now, can you understand also the miracles that are recorded in that book? If you *believe* them, then rational argument is superfluous, and if you doubt them you ac-

knowledge a fallacy in the basis which brings the whole system to the ground."

"My young friend," rejoined the Israelite with a significant smile, "I am pleased to see from your argument that you are pondering much on these subjects. You are searching for truth and you shall find it. With regard to your last question, I can tell you only that all the miracles recorded in the Old Testament had their local or personal significance. The persons for whose benefit they were performed never denied them, and we have no reason to comment on their truth or untruth. None of our religious principles are based on the truth of a miracle, consequently the miracles are out of the question when our religious system is discussed. When you read the Bible discerning between record and injunction, individuality and generality, and above all considering time, character and locality, you will understand it better than reading it as though it were a book written for you alone and appealing directly to you. I can not speak to you any further on this topic, you will therefore excuse me. Now I must bid you Good-bye."

The young men extracted from the Israelite a promise that he would come to see them. Some time afterward they engaged him to instruct them in the Hebrew tongue and philosophy. They gradually gained his confidence, so that he expounded to them his theories without reserve, and opened to them a new field of thought.

Hitherto they had been taught a religious system which is based on the supernatural; and as such a foundation can not have any hold on a searching mind, the theories and

principles which are constructed upon it must naturally fall to the ground. If, on the other hand, the mind of the adherent is unable to think for itself, and adopts the belief in supernatural things without research, its religious conceptions must degenerate into a passion which becomes as dangerous to others as it is disadvantageous to himself. The believer embraces the idea that the will of his Creator is in constant conflict with the physical nature of man. He then regards the world around him as a natural enemy to his better self—to his soul. Aye, even his own instinctive desire for such things as are necessary for the maintenance of life, is "the snares of the devil" to entangle his soul. He must deny himself for the sake of his Creator; he must "cast away the body for the sake of the soul." But with all the privation which he inflicts on himself, he must yet enjoy something of the world in order to maintain life. He is a sinner after all, and groans "Mea culpa," and must still rely upon supernatural "salvation." Everything near and around is the work of "Satan" in direct opposition to the ideal which he blasphemously terms God; he, the believer, must therefore hate it.

Judaism, on the contrary is based on the truth that man is a creature of God in the world and his soul is a direct emanation from Him. As a production of nature he cannot live without the things which are necessary to maintain life. Being dependent on all that surrounds him, he must do all he can to be useful in the world, he must "cultivate the earth" on which he lives. Needless abstinence is a reproach against Providence; it is as if man were to reject with contempt things which the Creator has provided for

him; as if he considered himself wiser than Providence, and deemed superfluous what was intended for his welfare. Man has no right to weaken himself, and thus deprive the world of the services he could render. "*The transgression against your blood will I visit on your persons*," said the Lord. The higher significance of man as a rational being, as the possessor of a soul, teaches him to discern what he may enjoy and what he must renounce in order to avoid evil consequences for himself and others. It inculcates in him a self-respect which prevents him from entirely surrendering himself to brutal enjoyments; he is higher than the brute by virtue of his intellect. In social life he must regard his fellow man as a being of the same nature, physical and spiritual, qualified for equal achievements, entitled to equal aspirations. All men depend upon each other for their temporal and spiritual welfare. It is therefore for their own interest to regard one another as brothers, to labor for the advancement of one another. The more a man acts in accordance with these principles, the higher does he stand in the scale of creation, the nearer does he approach his Creator. In harmony with all around us and with the eye directed to the Eternal Wisdom above us, we are men.

Potozky and Zriemby studied under the guidance of their teacher for some time. The truth which he unfolded to them was appreciated by the young noblemen. At last they concluded to embrace the creed of Judaism and declare themselves Jews before the world. In vain did their teacher try to dissuade them from doing so. Potozky was so sanguine in this project that he did not want to lose any

time in executing it. But the repeated dissuasions of his teacher and the calmer deliberation of his friend led him to content himself with the following arrangement proposed by Zriemby:

"I will depart for Bialostoky to take possession of the inheritance left me by my mother. You go to Rome and see whether, by trying to penetrate into the philosophy of the Christian doctrine, and aided by the highest clergy there, you will not be able to find in that faith something equivalent to the truth of Judaism. Probe the matter without prejudice, and inform me of your success. In case you find no more light in Christianity at Rome than we can see here, I will certainly become a Jew too; for I am as earnest a votary of the truth as yourself."

With this resolution the two friends took leave of their beloved teacher and departed each to his destination.

V.

ZRIEMBY AND HIS BRIDE.

When Zriemby arrived at his native city he found his father lying sick. The old Hettman was overjoyed to see his beloved and only son once more before his death. He died a few days afterward, expressing it as his desire that his son should marry a young relative who was brought up in his house. Sigmund Zriemby loved the girl, it is true; but the new ideas of religion and morality which he had conceived since he left his home had put a barrier

between them. He thought that he could never be happy with a woman who had different views on religion than himself. But his father's will was sacred to him, and the Jewish religion of which he practically was an adherent, did not teach him to despise all family ties for the sake of his God. He resolved therefore to unfold to Nadya, his intended bride, the truth of his newly-adopted principles without revealing to her the source from which he had drawn them, for he knew that the mention of Judaism would give rise to prejudice. In order to make the girl more clearly see the difference between his principles and those of the Roman dogmas, he ingratiated himself with her confessor, invited him often to the house and discussed with him religious subjects in her presence. For some time Zriemby did not know what effect these religious studies had on the mind of his intended. Once, when the confessor left the house after a hot controversy, Nadya said to her affianced:

"Is it not curious, Sigmund, that Father Chaminsky always prohibited my reading the Bible; but since he found out that you read it with me he insists upon my reading it with him also."

"And what book does he read with you?"

"The Gospel of St. Mark; but he always shows me parallel places in the Old Testament."

"Does he also give you other evidences of the truth of the Gospel: as, for instance, sound reason?"

"No. He quotes, 'Believe and be saved,' when I ask him for reason."

"And suppose a person cannot believe against reason?"

"He says, then, 'search the scripture,' and searches it for me."

"And if the scripture is not so explained as his belief dictates, and furnishes no evidences for his dogma?"

"Oh, you are provoking, Sigmund," exclaimed Nadya. "I wanted to ask you about something, and you turned it so that you have become the interrogator."

"Well, don't be aggravated, my dear; I did it unintentionally. Now, what were you going to ask?"

"Never mind now, I will speak to you another time about these matters," and the conversation assumed a lighter character.

The next day when Sigmund read the Bible with Nadya, and became particularly eloquent about some very poetical Psalm, she became thoughtful. There was an expression of sadness and apprehension in her face which her lover could not fail to notice; he asked her the cause of her sorrow.

"I am thinking of you, Sigmund," was her reply; "you are so religious, and speak with such enthusiasm about religious matters, that I am afraid you never could be happy with an irreligious wife."

"But I hope I shall be happy with you, Nadya!"

"Would you be so if I were not as strong a believer as you?"

"It would depend how far your heresy would go. Tell me openly, do you believe in all the teachings of the Bible?"

The girl confessed that she disbelieved many things, but the cause of her skepticism was Sigmund himself, with his

constant phylosophizing and referring everything to reason. She could not believe many things of the New Testament, although Father Chaminsky explained to her those things by referring to the Old Testament; but she had nothing against the teachings of the Old Testament, because they appeal to nature and sentiment. If Sigmund would explain to her the New Testament as he explains the Old, she would perhaps be converted. Father Chaminsky's explanations did not suit her, they were based on belief and shunned reason.

Zriemby smiled at the confession, made by his affianced with tears in her eyes. He assured her again that he hoped to be happy with her, and encouraged her to follow the dictates of her conscience without fear.

Two months afterward Nayda became Mrs. Zriemby.

While this was being enacted in Bialostoky, Potozky was pursuing his studies in Rome. He was in constant correspondence with Zriemby and informed the latter of his progress. About two years after the two friends had taken leave of one another at Paris, Zriemby received a letter from his friend to the following effect:

"From my former letters you will have perceived that my experience in Rome did not tend to strengthen my adherence to the Christian dogma. I have done my best, and God knows that I have been without prejudice in quiring into the truth of the Christian religion. I have 'weighed and counted and found it wanting.' If the general class of adherents to that dogma are unreasoning fools, the expounders and preachers thereof are knaves: for they live at Rome in the greatest luxury, and indulge

in all sorts of pleasure—moral and otherwise—at the expense of their credulous dupes. I will not speak more on this subject at present, but will inform you that in a few days I will depart for Amsterdam, where I intend to seek admission into the fold of Judaism. I hope I shall be perfectly justified in signing my next 'an adopted son of Abraham,'" etc.

Zriemby showed this letter to his young wife. He had told her about his friend Potozky and his pursuits, but had not plainly expressed to her that his friend was testing the validity of his religion and comparing it with Judaism. He wanted to see what effect his plain statement would have upon her. He was much pleased to notice that she was not shocked at the mention of Judaism and asked her what she thought of the proceedings of his friend.

"What do *you* think of it?" rejoined Nadya. "You know Count Potozky better than I, and your judgment is of more importance than mine."

"Potozky is my best friend, and I will always consider him so no matter what religion he professes.

"And I will always admire the man who has the courage to follow the dictates of his conscience, in spite of a world of difficulties on one hand and a world of temptation on the other."

Zriemby did not press the matter any further. From what he heard from his wife he was satisfied that she was quite prepared to follow him in the way he intended to go.

VI.

THE ADOPTED SON OF ABRAHAM.

One summer morning while Zriemby was sitting with his wife in the garden, his servant appeared with the announcement that a Jew was soliciting an interview with him.

"Did he tell you his name," asked Zriemby.

"Yes, my lord; his name is Abraham-ben-Abraham."*

Zriemby suddenly left his place and ran to meet the stranger. Nayda was astonished at the deportment of her husband. She asked the servant:

"What kind of man is it who asked for my husband?"

"He seems to be a man about thirty years of age. By his address and deportment I should never take him for a Jew."

The lady sent away the servant and sank into meditation with her head resting on her hand. A few moments afterward her husband appeared arm-in-arm with the stranger. Before Zriemby had time to introduce the Jew to his wife, she arose to meet them, and saluting the stranger courteously, she said:

"Be welcome, Count Potozky: my husband has told me so much about you that I should have recognized you even if we had met anywhere else."

Zriemby smiled at the sagacious knowledge of his wife, and the stranger said:

* All converts to Judaism assumed this name.

"I am very thankful for the extended welcome, and would be more so if it were granted by the name I am bearing now. I am no more Count Potozky. I belong to an aristocracy much older, and much more noble than that in which I was born. The family to which I belong now has gained its nobility not by shedding the blood of others on the battle-field, but by shedding its own blood for the welfare and enlightenment of mankind. Its pedigree dates back for thousands of years and on its coat of arms is the sign of 'a bush in flames which is not consumed.' My name is Abraham-ben-Abraham."

Nadya assured the guest of her respect for his religious feelings, and invited him to stay in the house for some time. But he refused to avail himself of her hospitality; he had only come to see his friend, and intended to depart for Wilna that very day.

"I love my family," he said, "with all the affection of a child; and desire to be near them and see them as often as possible. I know that they will shun my company, or rather, that they will hate me because I follow the dictates of my conscience. But I am resolved to avoid all difficulties. I will be near them for my own satisfaction, and never aggravate their feelings by approaching them. In short, I will see them, but they will never see me. I will live among my friends, the Jews."

Zriemby then informed his friend that he had formed a plan to make a voyage in foreign countries during the summer; he was advised by his physician to do so. His wife was not going to accompany him. The friends took the most affectionate leave of each other, and Potozky left for

Wilna. A few weeks after he was a peaceful resident of the Jewish quarter at Wilna, studying the rabbinical wisdom under the guidance of the great scholars of that community. Nobody knew who he was. He had a passport from Holland, and the credentials which he had of Jewish rabbis of Amsterdam gave no further information than that he was a גר צדק (righteous convert).

Abraham-ben-Abraham became known in a very short time among all the Jews of Wilna. His piety and his devotion to the cause of his adopted religion served as the best example, and cheered the hearts of those who were oppressed by their neighbor on account of their religion. He succeeded so well in his studies that he was ordained Rabbi, but he never officiated as such.

One evening Rabbi Abraham saw an elderly gentleman coming into the synagogue where he was studying. The appearence of the man was familiar to him; but he could not recollect where he had seen him. All students at the synagogue crowded around the stranger cordially greeting him; it seemed that he was very popular with them. Babbi Abraham's modesty did not allow him to push himself among the crowd and speak to the popular stranger; but he had a great desire to know who he was. By asking one of the bystanders, he was informed that it was Rabbi Menachem Man, a man of great learning and piety, who had been away from Wilna for four years. A few moments afterward the Rabbi of the synagogue brought up Rabbi Menachem to the convert and introduced them to each other. Rabbi Abraham observed his new acquaintance closer, and recognized in him the man who he once met

in the forest of Lebanon, and whose words had made such a deep impression on him.

"I heard of you, Rabbi Abraham, when I was in Mohileff," said Menachem. "Your glorious example is of great service to our creed, especeally at the present time, when the heart of the faithful needs cheering."

"My eyes were opened to see the truth," rejoined the other modestly, "by the mercy of God and by the good example of his faithful servants. It is certainly not by my own merit that I embraced Judaism; and I am enjoying the reward of my deed in communion with those who stand so much above the rest of mankind as the guardians of God's blessings to men."

"Holland is a country of great blessing to our brethren. Since our race has gained an asylum there, the Amsterdam community has produced men whose deeds will shed a lustre upon our history for ages to come."

"I consider Lithuania not inferior to Holland, and Wilna almost above Amsterdam in this respect."

Here their conversation assumed a more confidential turn. Rabbi Menachem seemed to be quite astonished at some remarks made by his interlocutor, and exclaimed:

"Blessed be the Lord! Who could recognize the dashing young nobleman in—!" But he was silenced by a remark of Rabbi Abraham, and the conversation was continued in a whisper.

Since that time the two Rabbi's were inseparable friends. The convert treated Rabbi Menachem with the affection and respect of a son, and the other responded with similar marks of attachment and consideration. They were re-

garded in the community as David and Jonathan; but nobody knew the real cause of their intimacy.

VII.

ZRIEMBY AND HIS WIFE.

ZRIEMBY, in the meantime, had gone to Amsterdam and had embraced Judaism. He settled there to study under the guidance of Hebrew teachers, and wrote to his wife something to the following effect:

"MY BELOVED FRIEND: I have embraced the religion, which dictates the laws of moralty, justice and kindness in a manner most consistent with the nature of man; I have become a Jew. I am morally certain that your religious views perfectly agree with my own in so far as I have had the opportunity of developing in your mind an appreciation of the truth. But you are a woman, and prejudice may have a stronger hold on your heart than on that of a man; I therefore did not reveal to you my intention of becoming a Jew. You are at liberty now to follow the dictates of your conscience. I bequeath to you all my earthly possessions which I left at home; the little I have taken with me will suffice to sustain me alone here, and the God of Abraham whom I worship will grant me the light of his truth to cheer my moral existence. I reflected much before I executed my design, and I came to the conclusion that it would be very ignoble in me te remain a nominal Christian and play a double-faced rôle in society; and having become

convinced of the truth of Judaism I could not deny the yearning of my soul toward its Creator; therefore I have striven to attach myself to the noble race of Abraham, and now have the priviledge of addressing you as

ABRAHAM-BEN-ABRAHAM."

Three months after this incident, a very touching scene was enacted before the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam. A young woman appeared before him and addressed him:

"Most honored Sir, I am not of your persuasion, but I hope that this will not be the cause of your denying me justice. I came to ask your decision in a matter of great importance. I will pledge my honor that you will be obeyed if the case is decided against the party which I represent; but I also request you to use your influence with the other party, that he should follow your decision if it is against him. He is an Israelite and belongs to your community."

"Tell me thy case, my daughter; I have no doubt that my decision will be obeyed by any member of our community without resistance."

"Allow me then, Rabbi, to state the case without naming persons first. Two friends made an agreement, before Christian authorities, that they would be true to one another in all their dealings; that neither of them would enjoy anything without the knowledge of the other; and whatever one of them should discover as being advantageous to social or moral life, he should immediately inform the other of his discovery and let him participate in it. For three years did those parties live together in harmony and true to their agreement. Subsequently one of

them found a new pursuit in life which procured him happiness, and he began to follow it without giving any information to his partner either of the new pursuit or of his resolution to part with him, until after the deed was accomplished. It happened that the new pursuit was of a nature which is perfectly agreeable to the other partner. Now I want you to decide whether the deserted partner has a right to insist that the partnership be continued, as the term of their agreement has not yet expired, or is the contract not binding because it was made before Christian authorities, and the deserter is a Jew?"

The Rabbi thought for a few minutes and asked her under what circumstances the agreement was entered into, and whether one of the parties was not forced by authority or allured by deceit into making the contract. He then told her that he could not give his decision immediately. As she did not want to name the parties concerned, he had to consult two or three other Rabbi's before he decided the matter. If she would come to-morrow she would find him prepared to give his opinion.

The next day she came and found a *concilium* of three Rabbis in session, the chief Rabbi presiding. She narrated the case before the council, and answered the questions put by them. The Rabbis consulted among themselves, referred to some books, and finally the chief Rabbi said:

"Well, my daughter, according to your statement to the case we have come to the conclusion that the contract is binding and valid, the deserter must keep his promise or pay whatever the deserted party would reasonably demand. But if the guilty party should have anything to state which

should weaken the strength of your statements, our decision must be reconsidered." The lady brightened as the Rabbi spoke and said:

"Now, Rabbi, would you please summon the convert Abraham-ben-Abraham of Bialostoky? He is one of the parties, I am the other. I will then speak before you in his presence without reserve."

The convert was summoned. As soon as he appeared in the apartment he became pale, and with an agitated voice exclaimed, in the Lithuanian language: "Nadya, for heaven's sake, what are you doing here!"

The rabbis looked astonished, and Nadya said, in German:

"I came here to seek my husband. Abraham-ben-Abraham, born Sigmund Zriemby, swore before God that he would love, honor and protect me all the days we are spared to each other. He promised to let me participate in all his joys and sorrows. He deserted me on account of his love for the Jewish religion. Now if I solemnly declare that I have the same predilection for this religion and will gladly embrace it even if he does reject me as his wife, is the promise which he gave in a Christian church binding on him or not?"

The Rabbis changed looks of astonishment. The presiding Rabbi then, in a lengthy and kind discourse, tried to persuade Nadya that she would never be happy if she embraced another religion only for the sake of her attachment to a Jew; that although the marrige agreement was binding on Abraham, he would not advise her to insist upon a nuptial alliance with him at the expense of her

conscience, of her soul; and that she had a right to demand of her husband her sustenance and remain a Christian in separation from him. But Nadya persisted in her assertion that she would become a Jewess whether the wife of Abraham or not. At last the Rabbi said:

"Go and demand thy rights from thy husband. Thy name shall henceforth be Sarah, the daughter of Abraham; and may the God of Abraham's praise prosper your house in Israel that it shall become a blessing for generations to come."

All present answered "Amen," and the convert threw himself sobbing in the arms of his Sarah.

VIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

One winter evning in 1749, there was a rumor in the synagogue of Wilna that the old Count Potozky had died. Some Israelites who rejoiced over this incident, because the enemies of the Jews had lost their champion by the death of this nobleman, were checked by the more reasonable of their brethern who recited: "Thou shalt not rejoice at the fall of thine enemy;" besides Potozky had not been such a zealous persecutor of the Jews since he lost his only son. When Rabbi Menachem Man heard the rumor, he requested his colleagues not to speak about it in

the synagogue. On the next day his intimate friend, the convert, appeared in the synagogue with a mourner's rent in his coat, and recited the mourner's prayer.

One month afterward, when old Madam Potozky came to the grave of her husband to strew spring flowers upon it she was astonished to find a Jew reclining on the tombstone apparantly in deep grief.

"My friend," said the lady to the Israelite, "I am glad to see one of your race mourning the loss of my husband. It shows me that one of you, at least, acknowledges that whatever my husband did against the Jews was with the intention of converting them and of saving their souls."

"Madam," answered the son of Abraham, "I would beg to state that the cause of my grief is quite different from what you suppose. Let not his behavior against my people be mentioned here, at the grave of Count Potozky. May God have mercy on his soul!" While he spoke the old lady, deeply moved, looked at him with astonishment.

"In the name of all that is holy, who are you?" she exclaimed. "Your voice reminds me of some one very dear to my heart, and your deportment is not that of a Jew."

"I am a Jew, my lady," answered the Israelite with a trembling voice, and turned to go.

"Stop, for heaven's sake! I must know something more of you. Are you a native of this city? Have you a family? Where do you reside?"

"I am a Jew of this city. I cannot stay here. Goodbye," he answered with a voice almost choked with emotion and went quickly away. The lady remained for a few mo-

ments stunned, looking after the disappearing figure of the Israelite.

"Does my motherly heart deceive me?" she soliloquized. "It was the voice of my Valentine; it is the figure of my Valentine.—My Valentine a Jew, what an absurdity! Jesus, Maria and Joseph, how could such a thought ever cross my mind! But what could any other Jew want here upon the grave of Count Potozky? That expression of sorrow in his face—that trembling voice! I must find him and speak to him again." She hastily left the cemetery and ordered her carriage to be thrown open. While on her way to the city she scrutinized every man whom she passed, but she could not find the one she had seen in the churchyard. There was only one way to the city, and the man could not have walked faster than the horses. He must have stopped somewhere on the road. Reaching the city she ordered the driver to return. She examined the people again; but all was of no avail. The person who had been in the graveyard had purposely avoided her, taking his way over the mountain to the city. He was not to be found on the road.

Lady Potozky made all efforts to discover the mysterious Israelite. She sent messengers to the synagogues around Wilna, giving them a minute description of the man she had seen on the grave of her husband, and promising the highest reward to the one who would bring him to her. But all her endeavors failed. It was Abraham, the convert, whom she had seen there. His filial love urged him to visit the resting place of his father, and it was the same emotion that made his voice tremble when he spoke to his mother,

who knew him not. When he returned to the city and told his friend, Rabbi Menachem, of his encounter, the latter said:

"I have a presentiment of evil. If your mother finds you, she will certainly desire you to renounce Judaism."

"I will rather die the death of a martyr," rejoined Rabbi Abraham, "than renounce the faith I have embraced."

"That is not the worst. If they discover you, and you remain persistent, God alone knows how many of our brethren will have to suffer for your conversion. They will not believe your statements and will accuse the most prominent members of our community of having misled you. My advice is, that you leave the city and go to some small town. The sooner you go the better, for Lady Potozky will certainly search for you. Her mother's instinct will tell her the truth, and who knows but what she may draw priestcraft into her council, and then—may the God of Abraham have mercy on us!"

Abraham left Wilna with a sorrowful heart. It was hard for him to part with his friends, among whom he felt so happy. Were it not for the fear of drawing others into misfortune nothing could induce him to leave Wilna. But his precaution was useless. God willed it that he should attest with his blood the sincerity of his belief.

IX.

MARTYRDOM.

The apprehension of R. Menachem Man proved to be well founded. Lady Potozky not being able to find the man she had met, told the story of her meeting to her confessor and requested his advice and coöperation. The priest was not long in search for a plan to discover the mysterious Jew. He had a Jewish convert in his monastery who belonged to the community of Wilna. He proposed to employ that man to ferret out the mystery. The lady gave her consent and the priest commenced operations on the morrow. A few days afterward Rabbi Menachem Man was summoned to Lady Potozky and asked the whereabouts of R. Abraham, his intimate friend.

"He left Wilna about ten days ago," answered R. Menachem. "I know not whither he has gone."

Nothing more could be extracted from him either by threats or by promises of reward. He was incarcerated in the monastery of St. Peter. and examined every day on the subject. Several times did the priest subject the old Rabbi to tortures in order to press out of him some information. But it was of no use; he said nothing more than he had said before. About a week after the imprisoning of R. Menachem Man, when Lady Potozky was driving

in the surburbs, she noticed an Israelite walking toward the city with a bundle on his shoulders. She looked closer at him and recognized the man whom she sought. She immediately stopped the carriage and alighted to meet the wanderer. The Jew was a little confused when he saw the lady, but he soon recovered himself and saluted her courteously.

"I am pleased to find you so unexpectedly," the lady said. "I have been desirous of seeing you again ever since I met you at the grave of my husband."

"And what may Lady Potozky want of an Israelite?"

"Of a Jew I want nothing," rejoined the lady, "but I want you to tell me who you are and where you were born?"

"You see, my lady, that I am a Jew, and my birth may be of little interest to you. I heard," he added with an effort, "that you were seeking me, and that in order to find out where I was you imprisoned a venerable, learned man whose only fault is that he has been a dear friend to me since I came a stranger to this city. This way of satisfying a curiosity seems to me somewhat unusual."

"It is not mere curiosity," the lady exclaimed; "the more I hear you the more am I impressed with the idea that you are not a Jew. Valentine? why did you desert your mother!" And she threw herself in his arms.

For a few moments R. Abraham held his mother in his embraces kissing her ardently. At last he said:

"Yes, mother, you have recognized me; but my name is Abraham, and I am an adopted son of Abraham the Patriarch. My heart was yearning for your motherly

embrace, but I knew that you would be prejudiced against my religious principles, and therefore kept myself away. Promise me now not to encroach upon the liberty of my conscience and to release my friend from prison, and you will see me as often as you wish. The Law of God enjoins me to fulfill all my filial duties toward you, only not at the expense of my soul. Rabbi Menachem did not know where I was, I heard of his imprisonment from a stranger, and came to liberate him at any sacrifice. The day he is set free you will see me again, not sooner." He abruptly left the lady who stood all amazed while he spoke, and disappeared in an adjoining forest.

Lady Potozky hastened home and sent for her confessor. The next day Rabbi Menachem Man was released from prison. Rabbi Abraham, true to his promise, went to see his mother. Nobody knows what passed between lady Potozky and her son; but for a few weeks there seemed to be a perfect understanding between them. He lived in the Jewish quarter and studied in the synagogue as before, and went every day to visit his mother for a few hours. Such a peaceful state of affairs could not continue for a long time when the ministers of the Roman Catholic church had a hand in the matter. About three weeks after the feast of the Passover. Rabbi Abraham-ben-Abraham was taken to state-prison on the charge of profaning the Christian religion. It seems that this was done against the will of his mother, for she endeavored to obtain his freedom. But all her efforts were of no avail; sentence was passed on her son that he either renounce Judaism or be beheaded in the market-place in Wilna. In vain did

the unfortunate mother try to persuade her son to renounce his adopted religion and save his life. He was resolved to die for his principles. Lady Potozky, seeing that there was no hope for her son at Wilna, repaired to Warsaw to apply directly to the king.

It was on a Saturday, the second day of the Feast of Weeks in the year 5509 (1749), when the sentence pronounced against Rabbi Abraham-ben-Abraham was to be executed. In all the synagogues of Wilna and the neighboring cities the most fervent prayers were offered for the converted nobleman. At ten o'clock in the morning the dead-march resounded in the streets of Wilna. Rabbi Abraham-ben-Abraham was led to execution. A curious mob surrounded the procession. A few Israelites followed from a distance, crying bitterly. Near by was a pyre where the body of the convert was to be burned after being beheaded. Pious Christian women were feeding the flames with fresh wood. A Roman Catholic bishop and the executioner awaited the convict on the scaffold. The Bishop with a mitre, a gown all laced with gold, and a large cross in his hand, and the executioner dressed in red, holding the polished axe which glittered in the sun, were the objects toward which all eyes were turned.

At last the procession arrived. Rabbi Abraham-ben-Abraham cheerfully mounted the scaffold. A low murmur arose from the multitude at his appearance. His graceful and undaunted demeanor impressed all by-standers. The Bishop raised the cross and addressed the convict in a long harangue, telling him that if he would renounce Judaism his life would be granted to him.

"You are illogical, my dear sir," replied Rabbi Abraham with a smile. "You cannot grant life, you can only take it. I believe in 'One God—there is none beside him.' 'Hear O, Israel, the Eternal our God is One in Unity!'" The Bishop pronounced anathema and raised his cross. The executioner's axe glittered in the sun at the same instant, and Rabbi Abraham-ben-Abraham's spirit rose toward the source of life and light.

At the same instant a courier's trumpet was heard. In a moment the old Lady Potozky arrived at the scaffold in the greatest haste, waving a paper in her hand. It was an authograph from the king, pardoning the offense of her son and suspending his sentence. But she had brought it just too late. The head of her son was lying at her feet. She fainted on the spot and died a few hours afterward. Rabbi Abraham's remains were burned on the pyre the same day.

A God-fearing Israelite, Eliezer Zinkes by name, gathered the ashes of the martyr, at the risk of falling into the hands of zealous Christians and being cruely dealt with for the crime, and buried them in the Jewish cemetery where the Pear-tree now stands.

END.

SKETCHES

OF

JEWISH LIFE AND HISTORY.

BY

HENRY GERSONI.

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To be but useful is my aim.

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